Solo
Leveling
6
DUBU
(REDICE STUDIO)
ORIGINAL STORY
CHUGONG

Solo
Leveling
6
DUBU
(REDICE STUDIO)
ORIGINAL STORY BY
CHUGONG
ADAPTED BY
h-goon

CHARACTERS

Jinwoo Sung

S-rank Hunter

Esil

Demon Noble

Ryuji Goto

S-rank Hunter,
Guild of the Drawn Sword

Byunggu Min

S-rank Hunter (Healer)

Dongwook Ma

S-rank Hunter,
Fame Guild

Jongsu Park

A-rank Hunter, Guild Master
of the Knights Guild

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14
Esil the Demon Noble
7

CHAPTER 15
The Alliance
61

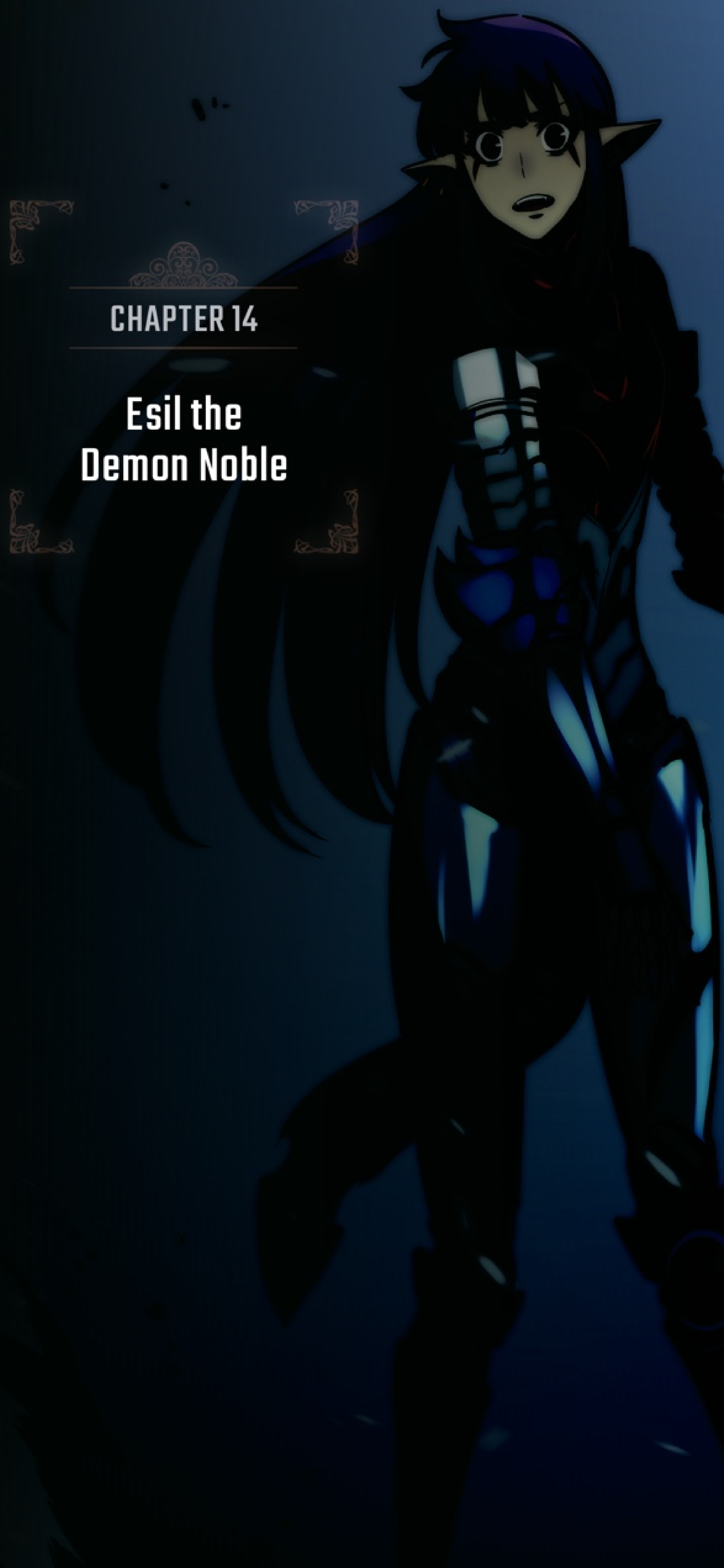
CHAPTER 16
Showdown of the S-ranks
145

CHAPTER 17
The Jeju Island Raid
233

Solo
Leveling

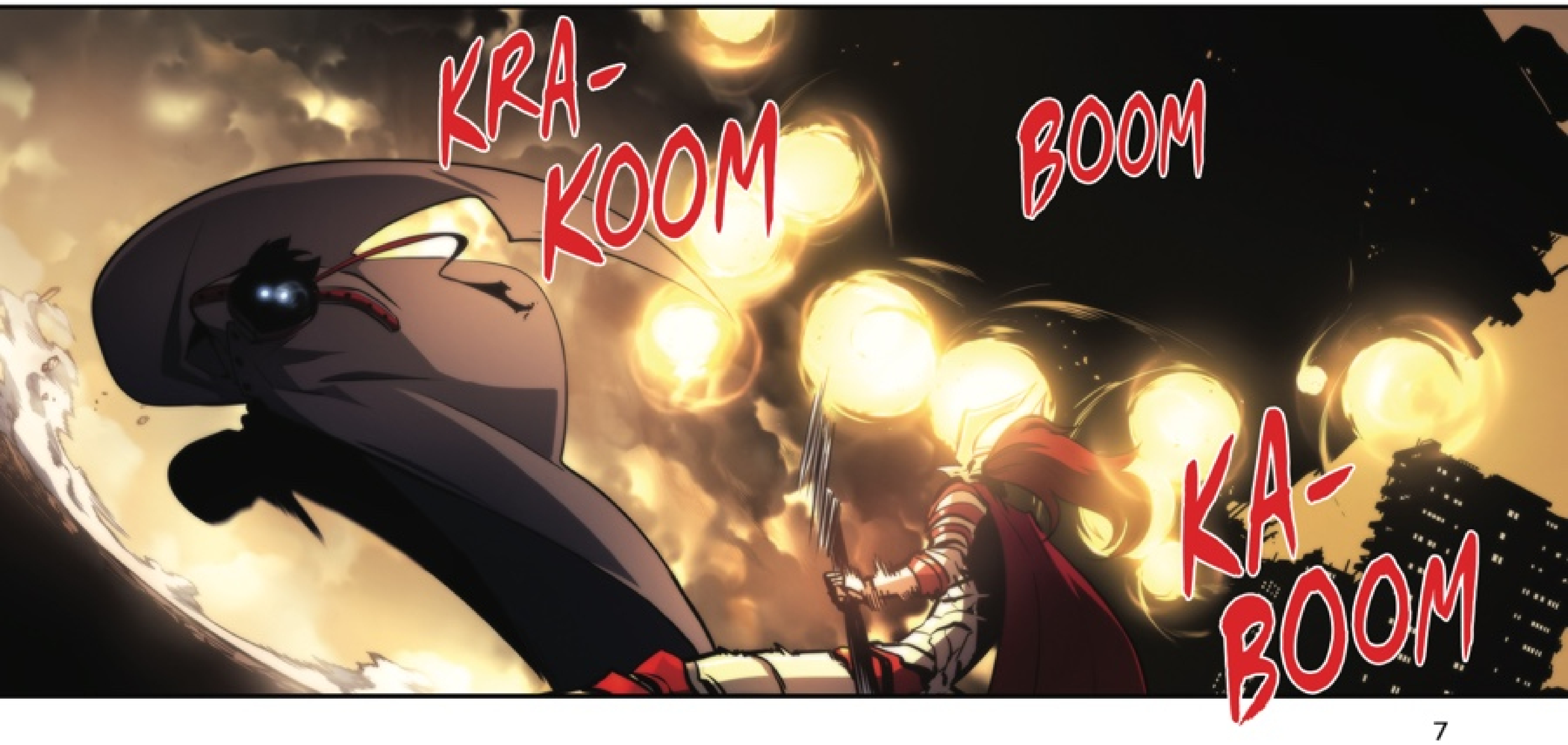
CHAPTER 14

Esil the Demon Noble



Solo
Leveling

BA
BA
BAM

SHK
SHK
SHK
SHK

KRA-
KOOM
BOOM
KA-
BOOM

MY EYES, MY NECK, AND THEN MY HEART—
HIS AIM IS VERY PRECISE.
CLANG
LOW-RANK DEMON = D-RANK
MID-RANK DEMON = C-RANK
HIGH-RANK DEMON = B-RANK
HIGHEST-RANK DEMON = A-RANK
ARCHDEMON = A+-RANK DEMON KNIGHT
DEMON NOBLE = S-RANK MIDDLE BOSS
GUESS THAT SUMS UP THE LEVELS OF THE DEMON'S CASTLE.
GRAB

SURRENDER!
I SURRENDER!
STRANGELY, QUITE A NUMBER OF DEMONS SPEAK HUMAN LANGUAGES THESE DAYS.
THAT VOICE...
ARE YOU...?
FWP
AH... AHH!

A WOMAN?
I'M S-S-SORRY. WE WERE IN THE WRONG.
P-PLEASE SPARE ME!

ARE YOU ASKING FOR MERCY AFTER YOU ATTACKED MY SOLDIERS?
I-I'VE COMMITTED AN UNFORGIVABLE SIN!
BUT IT IS MY FAMILY'S DUTY TO PROTECT THIS PLACE, AND WE COULDN'T JUST STAND BY WHILE OUR KIND WERE HUNTED BY THOSE BAST—
NO! I MEAN...
...BY THOSE SOLDIERS. I WILL FOREVER BE INDEBTED TO YOU IF YOU SPARE ME.
HOW CAN YOU ASK SOME-ONE WHO KILLED YOUR SOLDIERS TO SPARE YOUR LIFE?
IT IS THE KNIGHTS' DUTY TO PROTECT THEIR MASTER. THEY WOULD APPRECIATE MY SAFE RETURN.
WHAT A SELFISH PERSON... OR SHOULD I SAY, DEMON.
I DON'T FEEL RIGHT ABOUT KILLING HER BECAUSE SHE LOOKS SO HUMAN...
A CHANCE!

KLANG

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
Fang uses [Skill: Song of Protection].

IF YOU SPARE MY LIFE, I WILL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU WANT.
I CAN'T DECIDE IF SHE'S BEING SHAMELESS OR OPTIMISTIC.

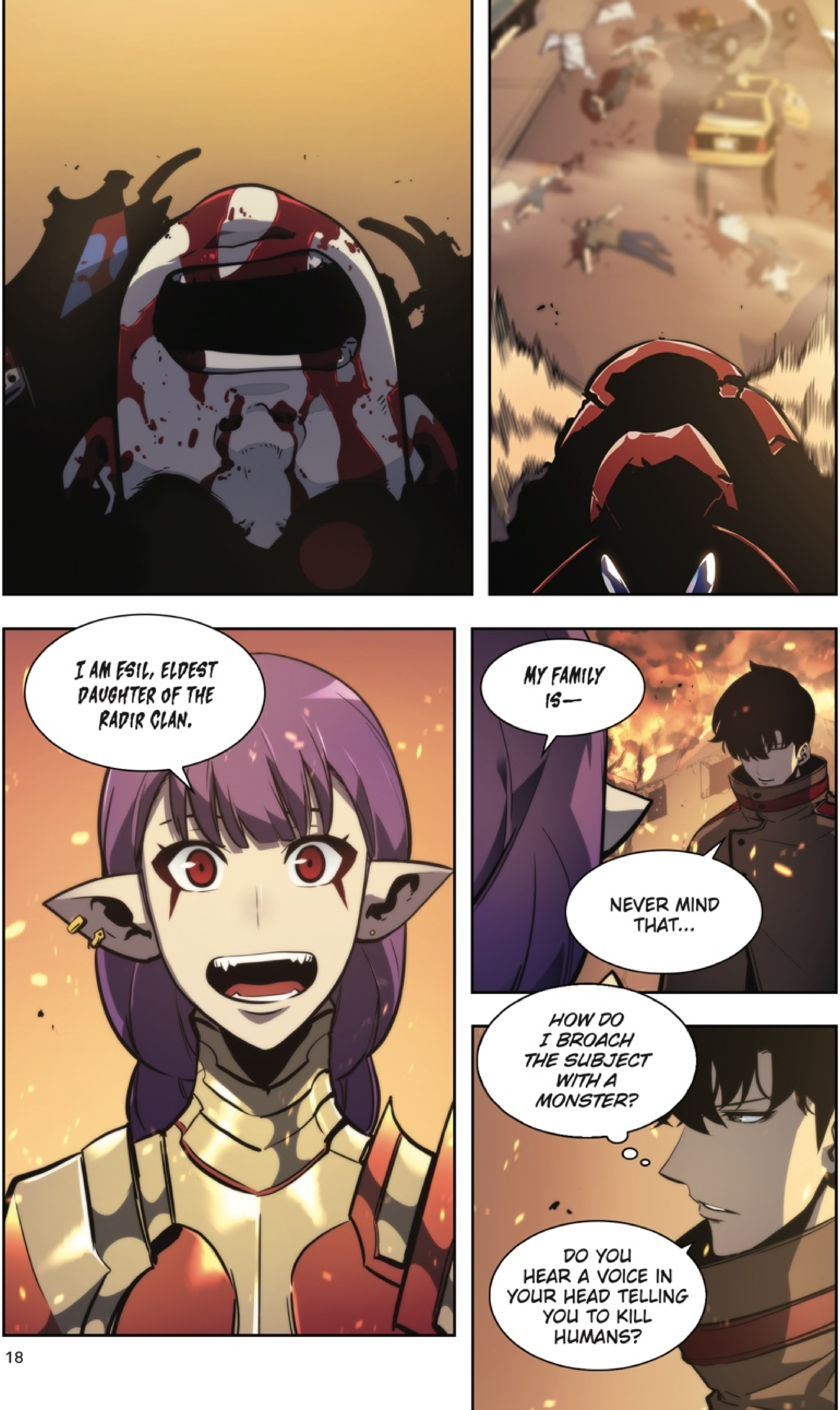
AN ENTRY PERMIT.
CAN YOU GET ME ONE?
Fang uses [Skill: Reverse Gravity].

OUR F-FAMILY GUARDS THEM.
FLOAT
FLOAT
IF YOU DELIVER ME SAFELY BACK TO THEM, I WILL TURN ONE OVER TO YOU.
DEMONS GUARD THE ENTRY PERMITS?
NO WONDER I COULDN'T FIND ONE. I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'RE GUARDED.
FLOAT
FLOAT
I KNOW WHERE ALL THE PERMITS FOR THE HIGHER FLOORS ARE!
IF YOU GUARANTEE MY AND MY FAMILY'S SAFETY, I CAN SHOW YOU.
THAT IS QUITE TEMPTING.
BUT CAN I TRUST THIS DEMON OR NOT?
SHF
BADUM
BADUM

CAN I...
I S-S-SPEAK THE TRUTH.
WHOO
...TRUST YOU?
[Skill: Murderous Intent] has been activated.
RUMBLE
I SWEAR!

WHUMP
FWIP
FINE.
IF YOU HAND OVER THE PERMITS, I'LL LEAVE IN PEACE.
TH-THANK YOU.
BEFORE WE GO...
...TELL ME, WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU?
CHOMP
CRUNCH

TURN
FLAP


I AM ESIL, ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE RADIR CLAN.
MY FAMILY IS—
NEVER MIND THAT...
HOW DO I BROACH THE SUBJECT WITH A MONSTER?
DO YOU HEAR A VOICE IN YOUR HEAD TELLING YOU TO KILL HUMANS?

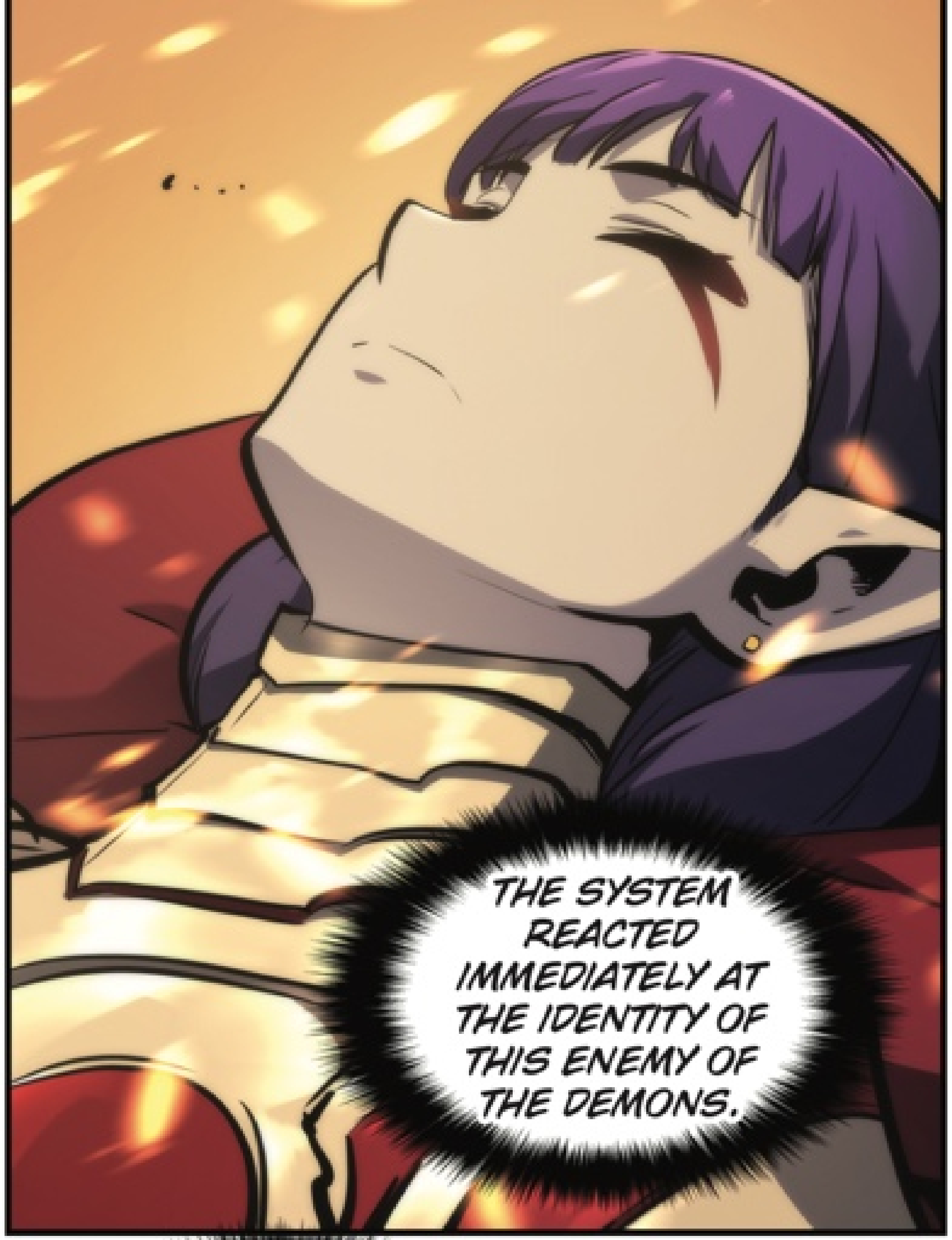
PARDON?
OH...
NO...
...BUT WE HEAR SOMETHING ELSE.
?
IT TELLS US TO PROTECT OUR HOME.

MONSTERS EXIST FOR A DIFFERENT REASON THAN MAGIC BEASTS.
THE MAGIC BEASTS EXIST TO KILL HUMANS, AND THE MONSTERS EXIST TO PROTECT THE INSTANCE DUNGEONS.
SO DOES THAT MAKE ME A MAGIC BEAST TO MONSTERS?
WHEN DID YOU START HEARING THIS VOICE?
EVER SINCE WE WOKE UP IN THIS PLACE.
WOKE UP HERE?
DID THESE MONSTERS LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE BEFORE?
THIS COULD BE A CLUE TO UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF THE SYSTEM.
THEN WHERE WERE YOU BEFORE?
IN THE DEMON WORLD. THEN ONE DAY, WE WOKE UP HERE.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN THIS DEMON WORLD?
A WAR...
ZZT
WE WERE PREPARING FOR A WAR.

A WAR? WHAT KIND OF A WAR?
YES.
WE WERE ON THE BRINK OF WAR AGAINST A TERRIFYINGLY POWERFUL ENEMY, SO WE HAD TO UNITE DEMONS FROM ALL OVER THE DEMON WORLD, BUT—
!!
THIS DIALOGUE INCLUDES CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION AND HAS BEEN REDACTED.
THIS DIALOGUE INCLUDES CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION AND HAS BEEN REDACTED.
THIS DIALOGUE INCLUDES CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION AND HAS BEEN REDACTED.
AGAIN. IT'S SIMILAR TO WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I QUESTIONED BARCA.
THE SYSTEM PURPOSEFULLY BLOCKED HER ANSWER.
IT MEANS I COULD GET HINTS IF I KEEP HER TALKING.

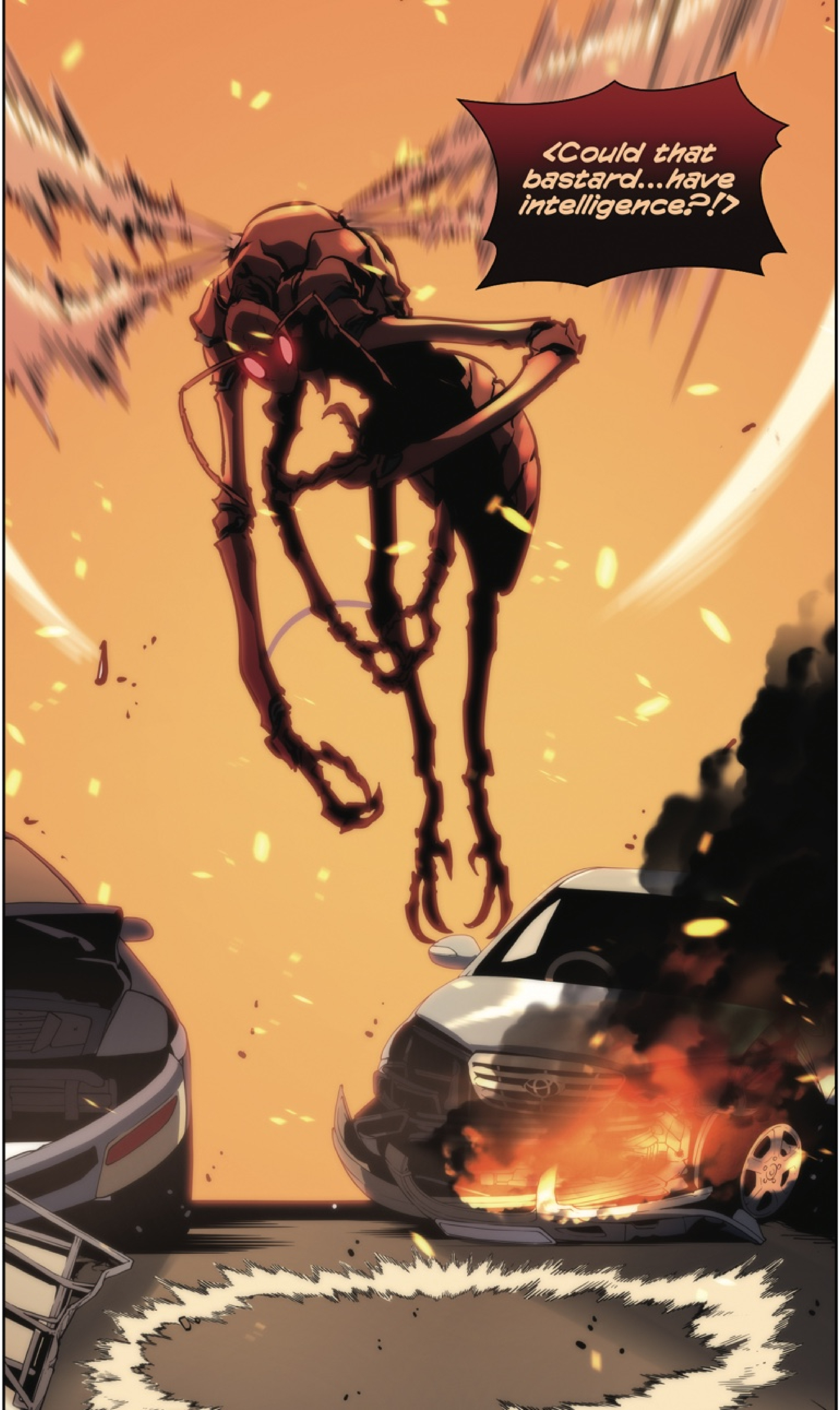
LEVELING UP, INSTANCE DUNGEONS, QUESTS, REWARDS, PENALTIES, AND THE JOB CHANGE PROCESS...
...THEY'RE LIKE ASPECTS OF A VIDEO GAME. A BACKSTORY FOR MONSTERS WOULDN'T BE OUT OF PLACE.
WHO WAS THIS TERRIFYINGLY POWERFUL ENEMY?
THAT'S...
ZZZT
BZZZT
BZZT
WHUMP
ESIL!!

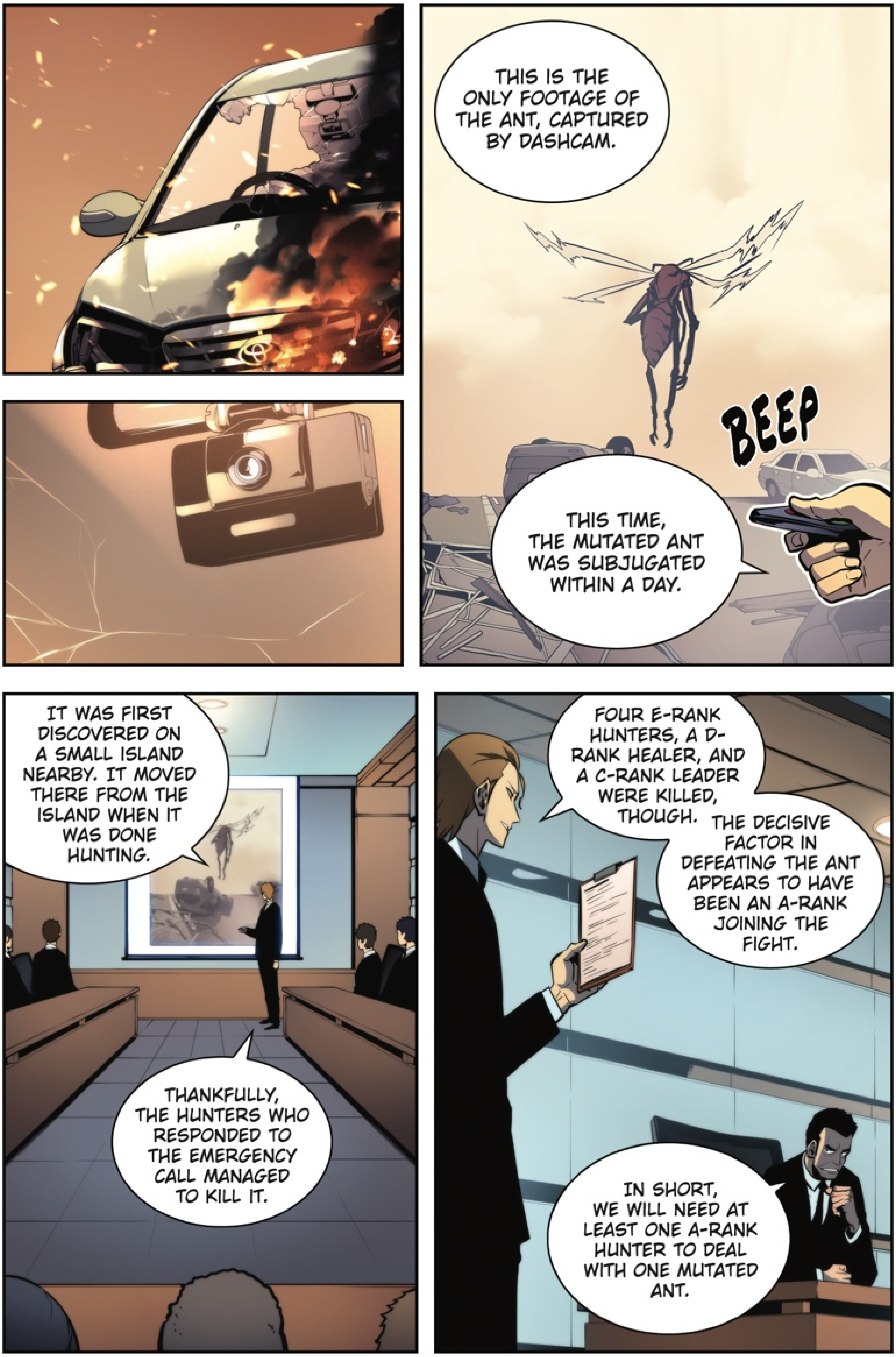

. . .
THE SYSTEM REACTED IMMEDIATELY AT THE IDENTITY OF THIS ENEMY OF THE DEMONS.

IF THEY HAVE SOME KIND OF TRANSCENDENTAL POWER...
...THAT THEY CAN USE TO AFFECT THE EARTH AND ME SOMEHOW—
THIS ENEMY OF THE DEMONS...
MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING THERE?

SPLASH

<A magic beast!!>
FLIT
KLANG
KLANG
FLIT
KLANG
<Quick! Attack it!>
<It's no ordinary magic beast...!>
SLASH
<What just happened?!>
<It attacked the healer first!>
<The E-rank hunters, the weakest, were killed first.>
<That beast cut down our numbers and killed the healer to decrease our battle power!>
<It knows it has to end this quickly to win!>


<Could that bastard...have intelligence?!>


THIS IS THE ONLY FOOTAGE OF THE ANT, CAPTURED BY DASHCAM.
BEEP
THIS TIME, THE MUTATED ANT WAS SUBJUGATED WITHIN A DAY.
IT WAS FIRST DISCOVERED ON A SMALL ISLAND NEARBY. IT MOVED THERE FROM THE ISLAND WHEN IT WAS DONE HUNTING.
THANKFULLY, THE HUNTERS WHO RESPONDED TO THE EMERGENCY CALL MANAGED TO KILL IT.
FOUR E-RANK HUNTERS, A D-RANK HEALER, AND A C-RANK LEADER WERE KILLED, THOUGH.
THE DECISIVE FACTOR IN DEFEATING THE ANT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AN A-RANK JOINING THE FIGHT.
IN SHORT, WE WILL NEED AT LEAST ONE A-RANK HUNTER TO DEAL WITH ONE MUTATED ANT.

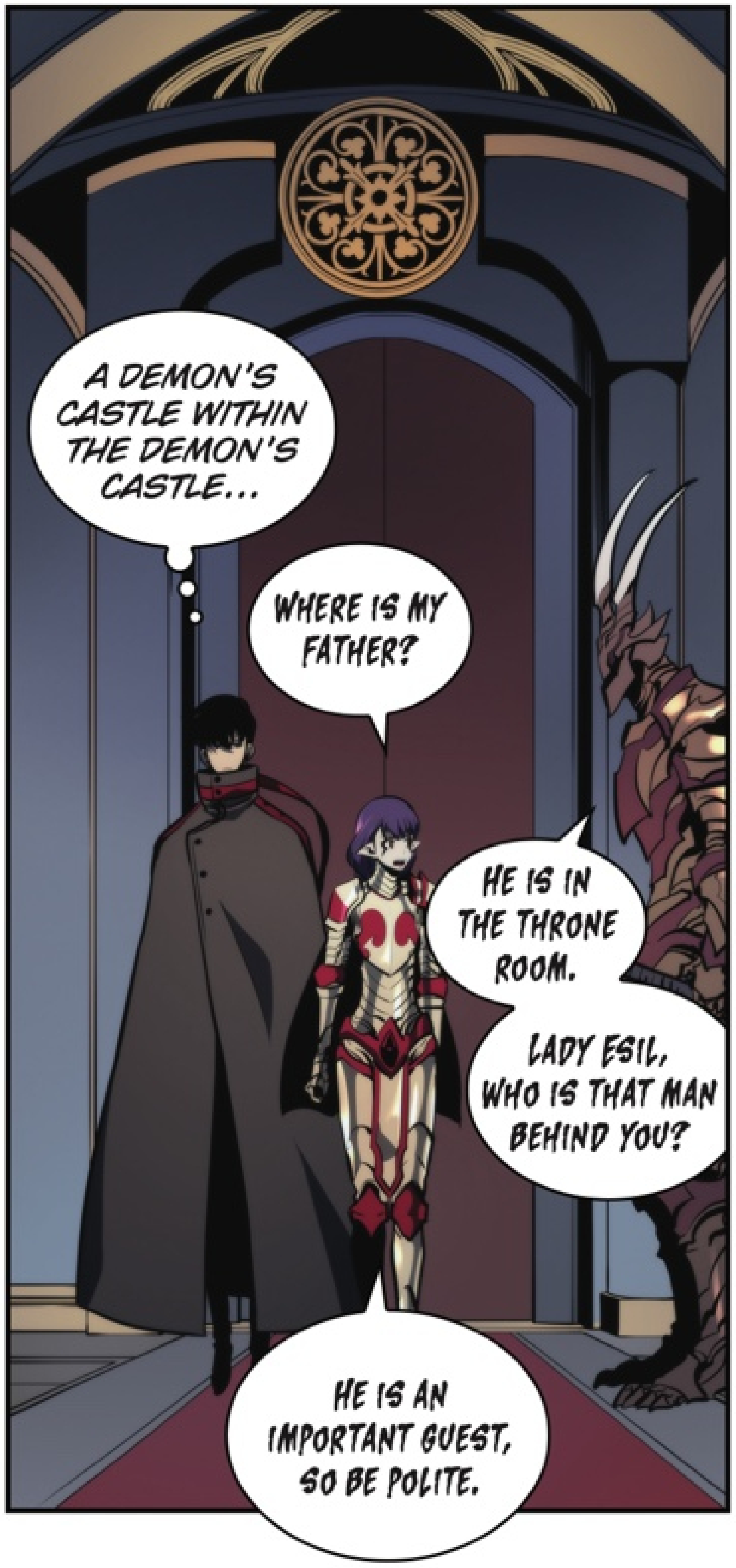
THE MUTATED ANT KILLED 294 CIVILIANS.
108 HUNTERS WERE DEPLOYED.
THE HUNTER'S ASSOCIATION OF JAPAN FELT THAT NUMBER WAS WARRANTED, SINCE THE MUTATED ANT COULD FLY AND COULD'VE ESCAPED.
JAPAN HAS ONE OF THE BEST NETWORKS OF HUNTERS IN ALL OF ASIA.
IF A COUNTRY LIKE THAT SUFFERED SUCH LOSSES, WHAT HAPPENS IF ONE OF THOSE ANTS MAKES ITS WAY TO KOREA?
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
WE HAVE A LOT OF ISLANDS, JUST LIKE JAPAN.
WE CAN'T GUARD EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM...
AN ISLAND MORE THAN 150 KILOMETERS FROM JEJU WAS ATTACKED.
IF AN ANT CAN FLY THERE, THEN THAT MEANS...
...NOT ONLY CAN IT REACH THE MAINLAND, BUT ALSO MOKPO.
IF IT WANTS, IT COULD EASILY CHANGE DIRECTION NORTH TO JINDO OR WANDO AT ANY TIME!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT CAN ACTUALLY FLY. IT'S MORE LIKE A BEE THAN AN ANT.
UNLIKE JAPAN, KOREA DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH HUNTERS TO PLACE ON EVERY ISLAND.
EVEN IF WE COULD PLACE ONE OR TWO LOW-RANK HUNTERS ON EVERY SINGLE ISLAND, THEY'D JUST END UP AS ANT FOOD!

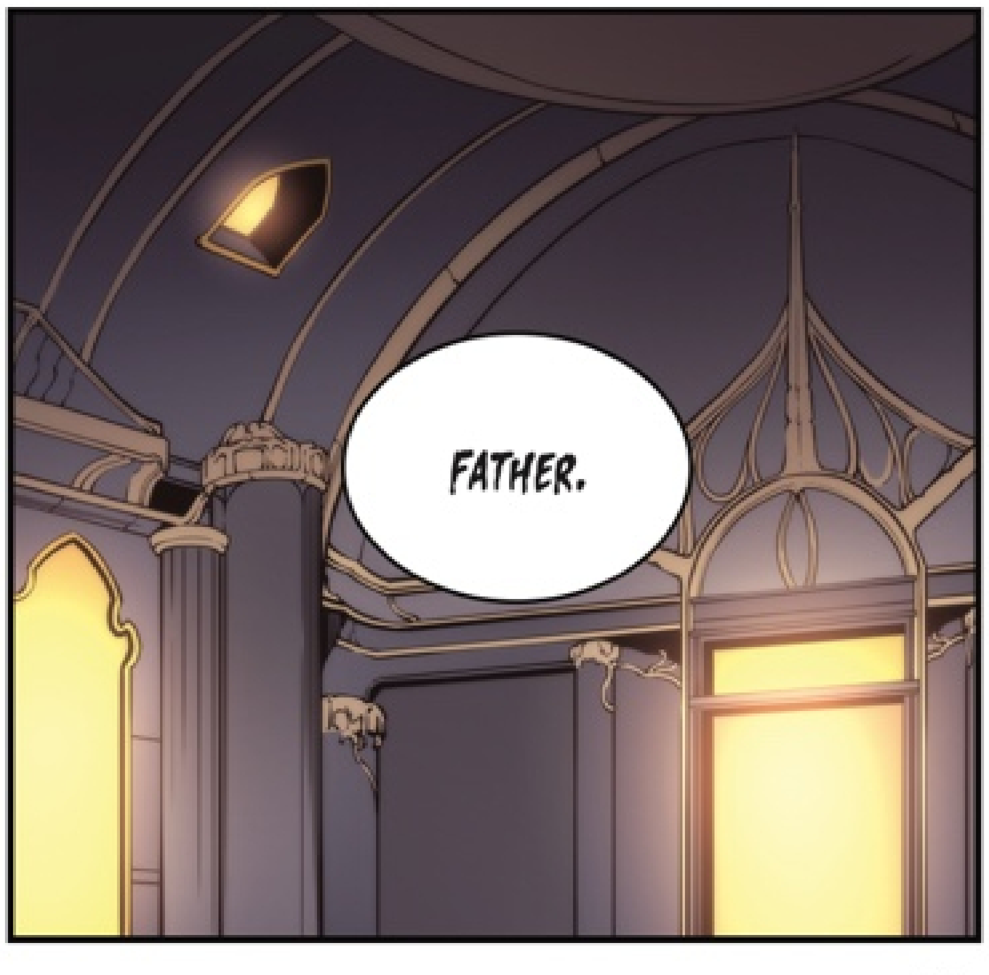
WHO WILL COME TO KOREA'S AID?
CHINA AND RUSSIA HAVE LEGIONS OF HUNTERS, BUT THEY ALSO HAVE GREAT SWATHS OF LAND TO PROTECT.
THE UNITED STATES REFUSED TO HELP WHEN THE S-RANK GATE OPENED.
THIS IS NOT GOOD.
PRESIDENT GO.
MANAGER WOO.
I KEPT THIS FROM THE MEETING, BUT...
...WE'VE HAD SOME BACK-CHANNEL CONTACT.
BACK-CHANNEL? WHO?
HUNTER DONGSOO HWANG OF THE SCAVENGER GUILD.
HE SAYS HE'LL HELP OUT WITH THE JEJU ISLAND RAID.

FOR OBVIOUS REASONS.
YES. HE'S PROBABLY AFTER HUNTER SUNG.
SO WHAT DID YOU SAY?
WE HAVE DECLINED HIS OFFER, CITING THE CONFLICT HE HAD WITH HUNTER YOONHO BAEK DURING THE RED GATE INCIDENT.
BUT DONGSOO HWANG ISN'T THE ONLY HUNTER WHO HAS REACHED OUT TO US.
THERE'S MORE?
ONE OF THE NATIONAL-LEVEL HUNTERS.
COULD YOU COME WITH ME TO MEET HIM, PRESIDENT GO?

HUH?
WHEN DID I PASS OUT?
YOU UP?
I GUESS YOU DEMONS DON'T LIKE ONE ANOTHER MUCH.

THESE GUYS TRIED TO ATTACK YOU.
NO WAY...
YOU PROTECTED ME WHILE I WAS OUT?
THANK YOU.
UNINTELLIGENT DEMONS DON'T CONSIDER DEMONS WITH INTELLIGENCE AS THEIR OWN KIND.
HOW FAR TO WHERE THE PERMIT IS?


A DEMON'S CASTLE WITHIN THE DEMON'S CASTLE...
WHERE IS MY FATHER?
HE IS IN THE THRONE ROOM.
LADY ESIL, WHO IS THAT MAN BEHIND YOU?
HE IS AN IMPORTANT GUEST, SO BE POLITE.


FATHER.

I'VE BROUGHT A GUEST.
IS THIS THE THRONE ROOM?
IF I'D FOUGHT MY WAY IN HERE, THIS IS WHERE THE BOSS BATTLE WOULD'VE TAKEN PLACE.
ESIL.
YOU... YOU!
WHO THE HELL DID YOU BRING?!
FATHER, HE'S A GUEST...
WHAT KIND OF GUEST BRINGS AN ARMY INTO THE HOST'S HOUSE?
PARDON?
ESIL, CAN'T YOU SEE THEM?

THE COUNTLESS SOLDIERS HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWY DEPTHS OF THAT MAN?!!
HE'S GOT KEEN SENSES.
HOW DARE YOU BRING SOLDIERS INTO MY HOUSE?!
FATHER!
DUH
DUN
I MADE A PROMISE.
I WILL LEAVE HERE IN PEACE IF YOU HAND OVER AN ENTRY PERMIT.
GULP

IS THIS THE MAN WHO'S BEEN KILLING DEMONS AND CLEARING FLOORS AT AN INCREDIBLE SPEED?
DESPITE THE RADIR CLAN'S NOBLE STATUS, WE ARE SOME OF THE WEAKEST DEMONS, RANKING TWENTIETH IN STRENGTH OVERALL.
IF HE BESTED VULCAN AND METUS THAT EASILY, I'M NOT SURE WE CAN DEFEAT HIM...!
AN ENTRY PERMIT... IS THAT YOUR ONLY CONDITION?
THAT, AND...
PAT
...I'D LIKE TO TAKE HER.

ESIL SAID SHE KNOWS WHERE ALL THE ENTRY PERMITS FOR THE HIGH FLOORS ARE.
I NEED HER TO GUIDE ME.
WHAT...?
DID I SAY SOMETHING WRONG?
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
A GUIDE?

THE PERMIT AND A GUIDE. IS THAT REALLY ALL YOU WANT?
HE SEEMS TO HAVE MIS-UNDERSTOOD WHY I NEED HER.
IT HURTS MY PRIDE TO COMPROMISE WITH A HUMAN, BUT...
...HAD I KNOWN THIS MONSTROUS HUMAN WAS THE MASTER OF THE SHADOW SOLDIERS, I WOULDN'T HAVE EVEN STARTED A COUNTER-ATTACK.
YOU WON'T HARM MY DAUGHTER, WILL YOU?
A MONSTER WHO WORRIES ABOUT HIS DAUGHTER...
I'LL KEEP MY PROMISE.
GOOD.
SHP

ITEM
[ITEM: Entry Permit]
ACQUISITION DIFFICULTY: ???
CATEGORY: ??
This permit grants access to the eighty-first floor of the Demon's Castle. It can be used only on the magic teleportation circle on the eightieth floor.
IT'S AN ACTUAL ENTRY PERMIT.
AM I SUPPOSED TO GET PERMITS FROM DIFFERENT CLANS FROM HERE ON?
SHALL WE LEAVE RIGHT AWAY, THEN?
YES.
A demon noble would like to join your party.
PARTY?
Your companion may use the teleportation circle, and it is possible to share experience points based on her contribution
SHARE EXPERIENCE POINTS WITH HER?
BUT IF IT'S BASED ON HER CONTRIBUTION...
IF A FIGHT BREAKS OUT, DON'T GET INVOLVED. I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT.

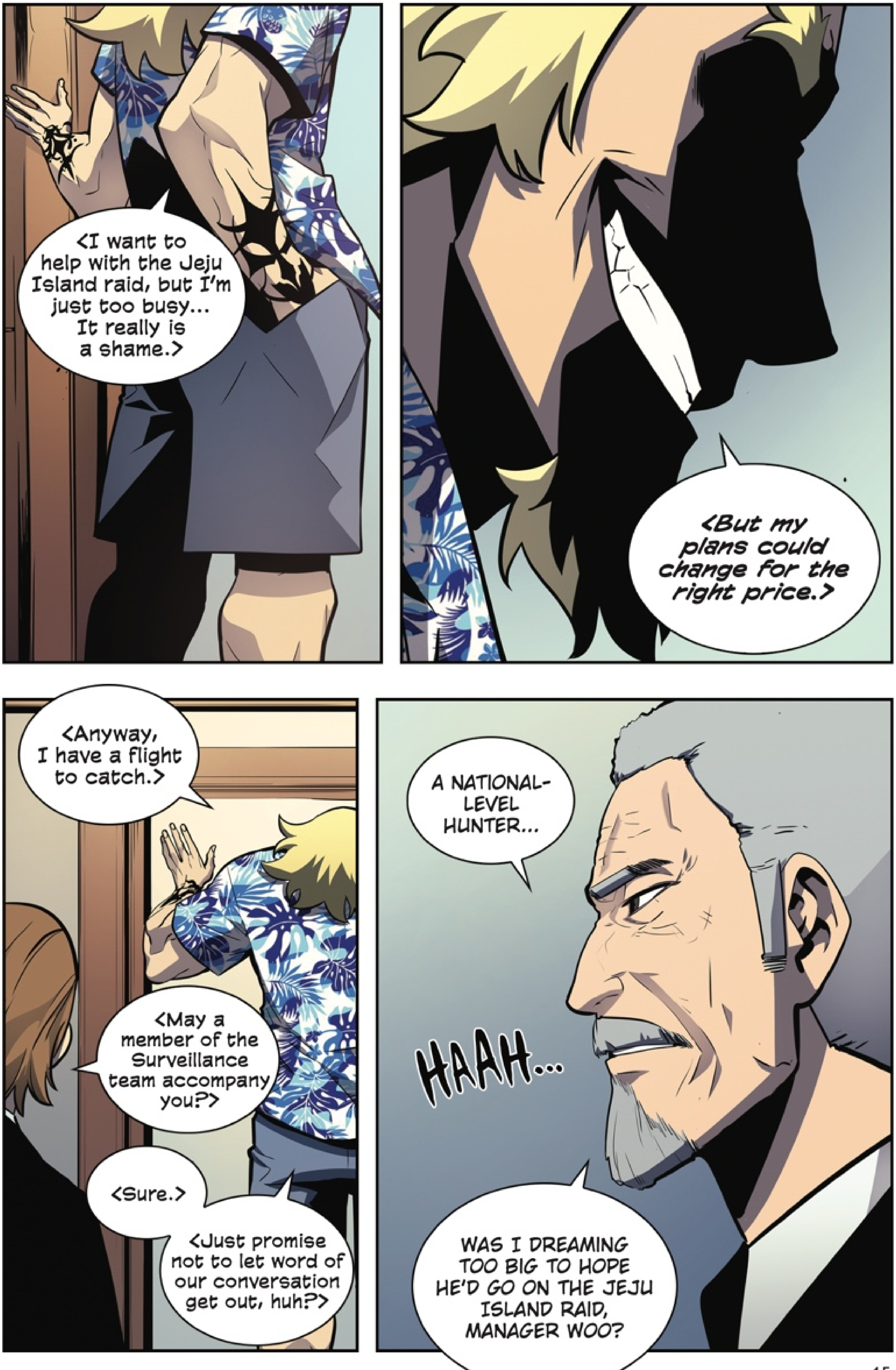
...UNDER-STOOD.
ARE YOU OKAY WITH WALKING?
ONLY YOUR COMPANION IS ALLOWED TO TRANSFER TO THE NEXT FLOOR.
SO I CAN'T BRING A HORSE.
?

HOLD ON, PLEASE.
THIS DRINK IS FAVORED BY THE GARSH CLAN.
MY FATHER HAS PREPARED ITEMS EACH CLAN LIKES.
WHAT'S THAT FOR?
IF YOU BRING THIS TO THE NEGOTIATIONS—
NEGOTIA-TIONS?
IS YOUR FAMILY CLOSE TO THIS GARSH CLAN?
N-N-NO.
NOBLES HAVE FOUGHT OVER RANKS EVER SINCE WE LIVED IN THE DEMON WORLD...
...BUT THEY'RE NOT AN UNREASON-ABLE CLAN.
THAT'S FINE, THEN.
WAIT HERE.

THIS WON'T TAKE LONG.
MINUTES LATER...
...CASTLE GARSH WAS UP IN FLAMES.

THE HUNTER'S ASSOCIATION
<Your English is quite good.>
<He's very good at hide-and-seek. We can't find him, even with the Surveillance team on him.>
<But did I hear you wrong?>
<You can't locate Jinwoo Sung? Korea's tenth S-rank awakened being?>
<Hmm... so how can I trust you?>
<The Hunter's Association of Korea knows better than to lie to a national-level hunter.>
<I see.>
SMIRK
<Oh right. I heard my boy, Dongsoo Hwang, had visited Korea and caused some trouble.>
<As an S-rank hunter, we can't control his every action.>

"MY BOY," EH...?
SOUNDS LIKE HUNTER HWANG IS UNDER THE THUMB OF THE UNITED STATES.
<Naturally, I was interested in Jinwoo Sung too, but...>
<...I wanted to ask the Hunters Association of Korea to prohibit Dongsoo from visiting Korea.>
<But you say you already have.>
<Yes, that is right.>
<Then we can wrap this up quickly.>
<The next time I have a request, I'll just call you.>
I'M NOT A SMALL MAN, BUT...
...I LOOK LIKE A CHILD IN FRONT OF THIS GUY.
<I hear things are quite hectic in Korea because of Jeju Island.>
<I hope my visit didn't give you any wrong ideas.>

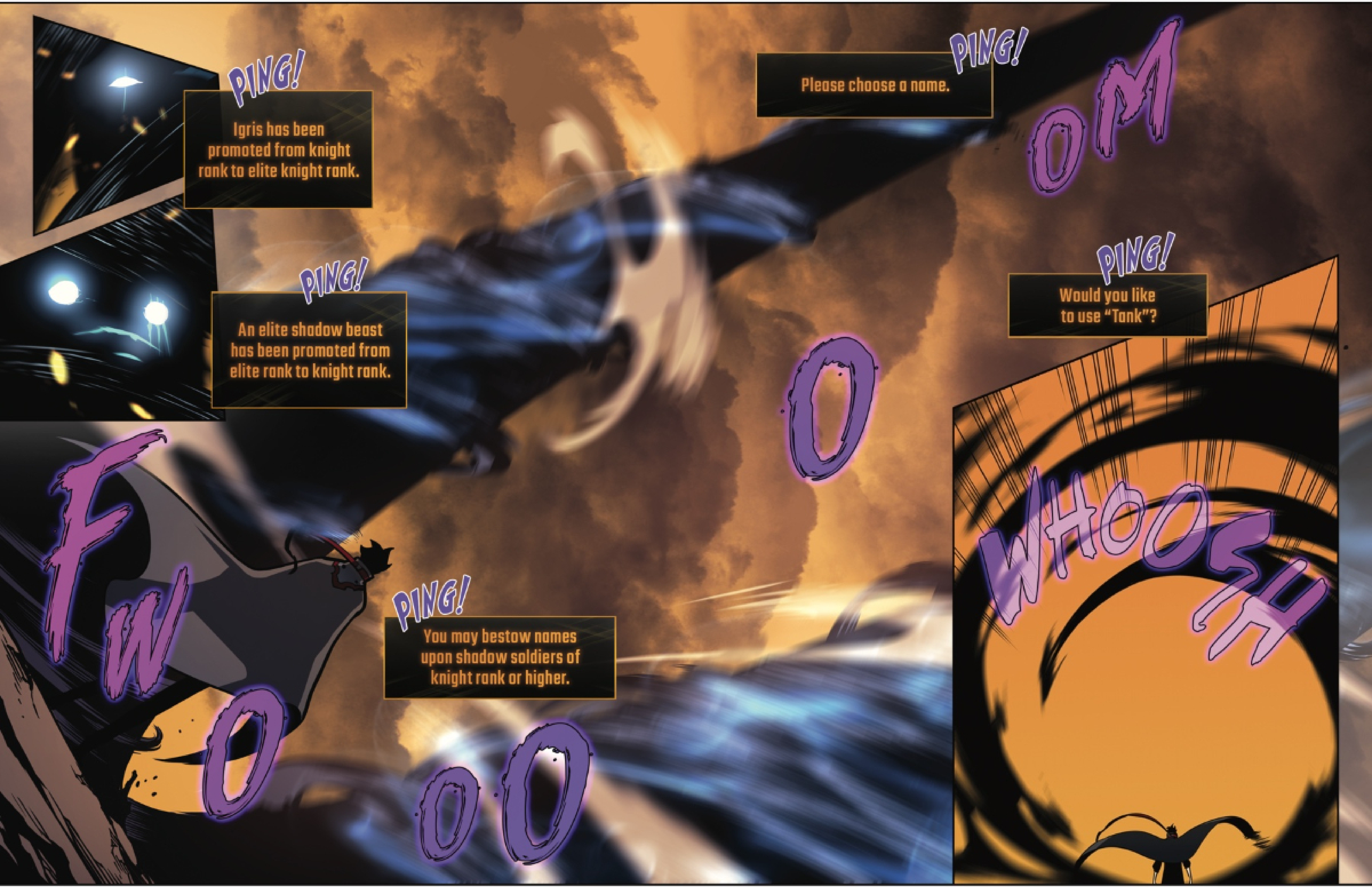

<I want to help with the Jeju Island raid, but I'm just too busy... It really is a shame.>
<But my plans could change for the right price.>
<Anyway, I have a flight to catch.>
<May a member of the Surveillance team accompany you?>
<Sure.>
<Just promise not to let word of our conversation get out, huh?>
A NATIONAL-LEVEL HUNTER...
HAAH...
WAS I DREAMING TOO BIG TO HOPE HE'D GO ON THE JEJU ISLAND RAID, MANAGER WOO?

PLEASE DO NOT WORRY, PRESIDENT GO.
JAPAN'S COOPERATION HAS BEEN CONFIRMED.
A MEGA-LARGE JAPANESE GUILD WILL BE VISITING KOREA TODAY.

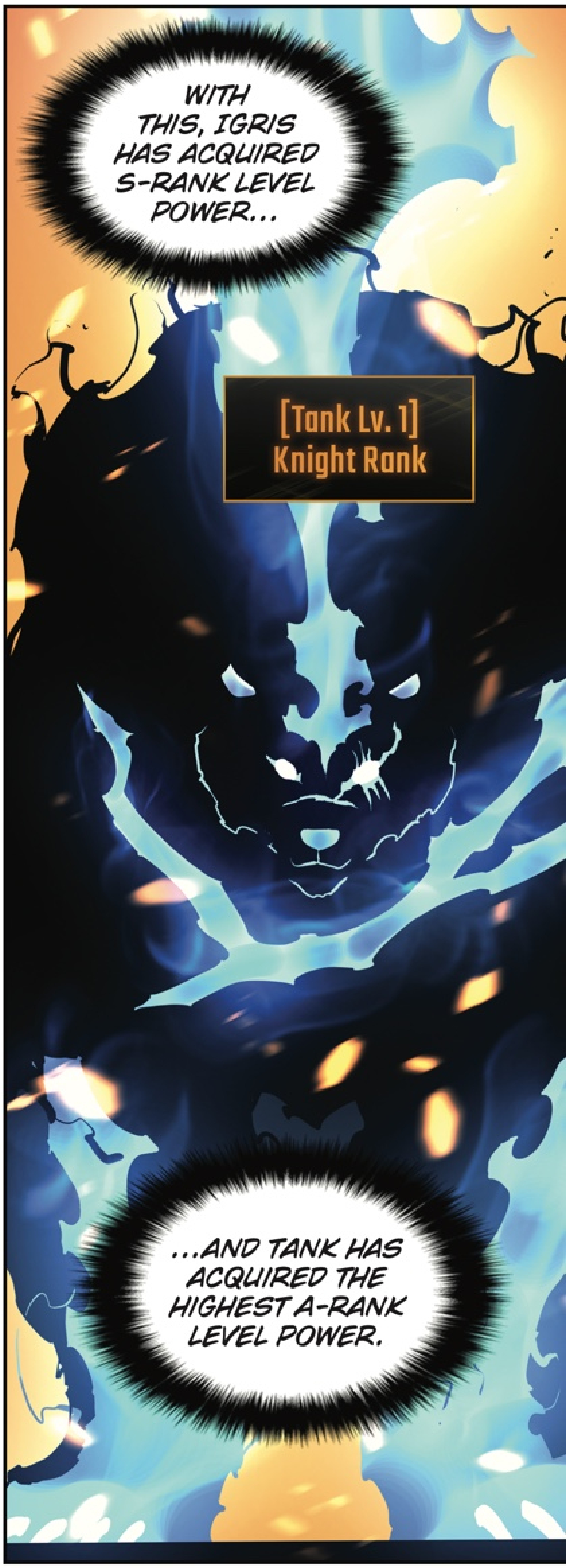
You have defeated a demon knight.
You have acquired 3,000 XP.
You have defeated a demon knight.
You have acquired 3,000 XP.

You have defeated a demon noble.
You have acquired 4,500 XP.
Level: 87
HIGH OPPONENT LEVEL MEANS HIGH AMOUNT OF XP REWARDED.
AND...
[Igris Lv. MAX]
Knight Rank
This soldier has reached the maximum possible level for his rank. With the monarch's approval, he may rise to the next rank.
[Shadow Beast Lv. MAX]
Elite Rank
This soldier has reached the maximum possible level for his rank. With the monarch's approval, he may rise to the next rank.

IT LOOKS LIKE MY SOLDIERS CAN RISE IN RANK ONCE THEY REACH THE DESIGNATED LIMIT.
An elite rank shadow beast has requested permission to rank up.
A knight rank, Igris, has requested permission to rank up.
Would you like to promote them?
PERMISSION GRANTED.
FWIIIISH
FWOOOOOM


PING!
Igris has been promoted from knight rank to elite knight rank.
PING!
An elite shadow beast has been promoted from elite rank to knight rank.
FWOOOOOM
PING!
You may bestow names upon shadow soldiers of knight rank or higher.
PING!
Please choose a name.
PING!
Would you like to use "Tank"?
WHOOSH

[Igris Lv. 1]
Elite Knight Rank
IGRIS IS EMITTING A DIFFERENT KIND OF ENERGY!


WITH THIS, IGRIS HAS ACQUIRED S-RANK LEVEL POWER...
[Tank Lv. 1]
Knight Rank
...AND TANK HAS ACQUIRED THE HIGHEST A-RANK LEVEL POWER.

UM... JINWOO, SIR?
I SAID YOU DON'T HAVE TO CALL ME SIR.
UM, JINWOO...SIR.
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY FAMILIES HAVE BEEN VANQUISHED?
WE'RE ON THE EIGHTY-NINTH FLOOR NOW... THAT MAKES NINE EXCLUDING YOUR FAMILY?
ARCHNOBLE CLANS DEFEND THE NINETIETH FLOOR AND UP.
THEY'RE ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL FROM REGULAR HIGH-RANK NOBLES.
IF YOU NEGOTIATE PEACEFULLY LIKE YOU DID WITH OUR FAMILY, THEY MAY GIVE YOU—
IF I WERE WEAKER THAN YOU, WOULD YOU HAVE EVEN TALKED TO ME?

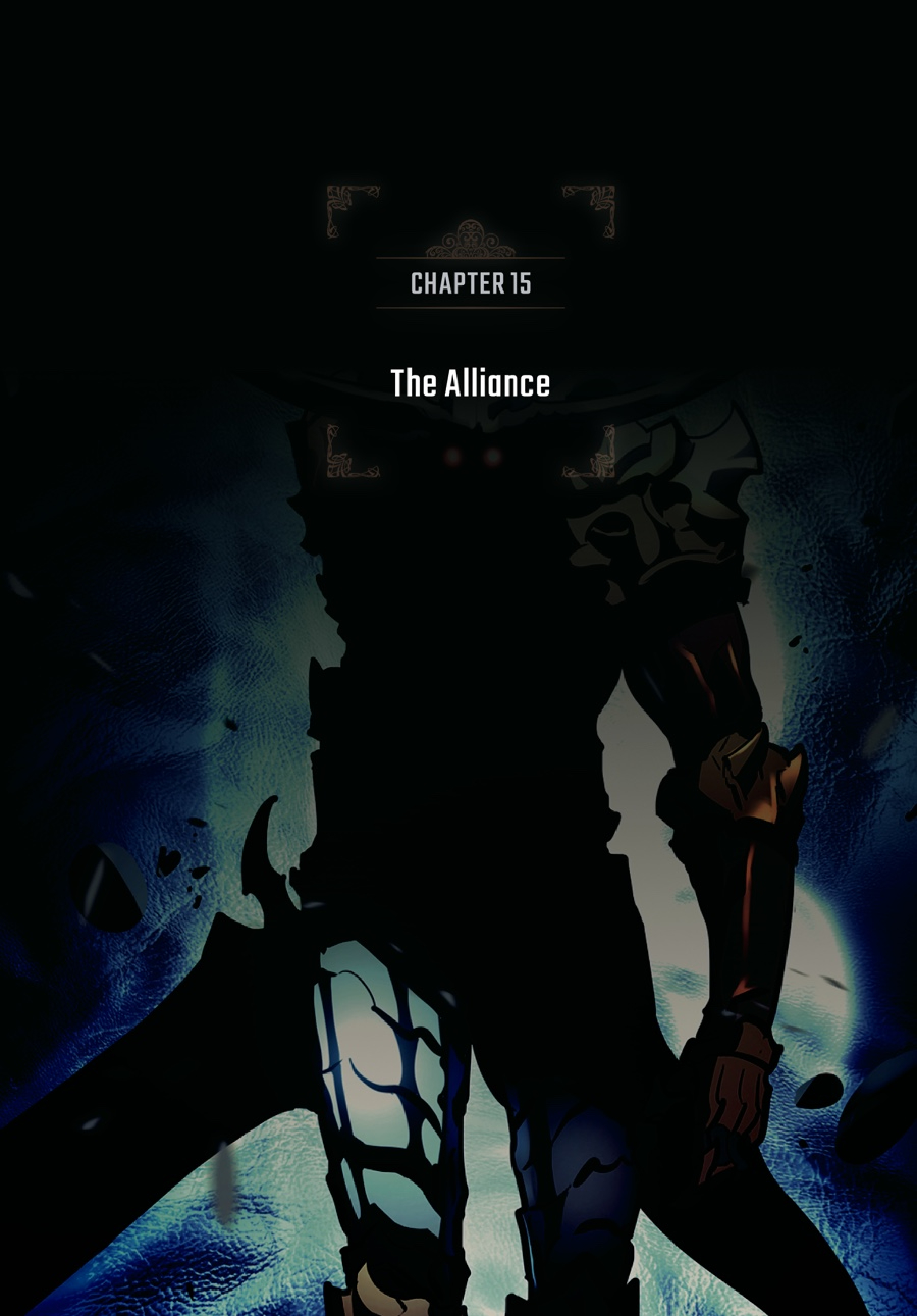
IT IS WHAT IT IS.
YOU SAID THERE'S A LOT OF COMPETITION AMONG NOBLE FAMILIES.
I'LL MAKE THE RADIS CLAN THE NUMBER-ONE FAMILY.
MMM...
...OUR FAMILY NAME IS ACTUALLY RADIR.
UM, JINWOO... SIR.
WHY DID YOU SHOW MY FAMILY MERCY?
BECAUSE I LIKE YOU.
JOLT
WH-WHAT?!

MAYBE I JUST GET ALONG WITH DUMMIES, LIKE WITH JINHO?
JUST AS ESIL SAID, THE DIFFICULTY LEVEL INCREASED DRASTICALLY FROM THE NINETIETH FLOOR.
THE NUMBER AND LEVEL OF MONSTERS GUARDING EACH FLOOR WERE INCOMPARABLY HIGHER THAN THOSE ON LOWER FLOORS.
I CAN'T EVEN PUT MY INCREASING INTELLIGENCE STAT TO GOOD USE BECAUSE MY MANA FLUCTUATES SO MUCH.
THAT MEANS COUNTLESS SHADOW SOLDIERS ARE DYING, REGENERATING, AND REPEATING THE CYCLE OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
97TH FLOOR
BUT I DIDN'T REACH THE NINETIETH FLOOR THROUGH SHEER LUCK.
Level: 90

FIRST THE FIFTH-RANKED RICARDO CLAN AND NOW THE FOURTH-RANKED PATHOS CLAN...
ARE OTHER HUMANS AS POWERFUL AS Y-YOU?
MAYBE TWO OF THEM?
GUNHEE GO AND HAEIN CHA. THOSE TWO WERE DEFINITELY STRONGER THAN MOST S-RANKS.
BASED ON HER ENERGY, I'D PUT HAEIN A FEW LEVELS HIGHER THAN THE ULTIMATE HUNTER, JONGIN.
EVEN AMONG S-RANKS, THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN STRENGTH.
SINCE THEIR POWERS CAN'T BE EVALUATED PRECISELY, THERE MIGHT BE A BIGGER DISCREPANCY COMPARED TO OTHER RANKS.
I WAS CLOSER TO PRESIDENT GO'S LEVEL BEFORE, BUT IT MAY BE DIFFERENT NOW THAT I'VE REACHED THE HIGHEST FLOOR.
YOU CAN GO BACK.
I'LL FIND MY OWN WAY FROM HERE ON.

WHAT?
TH-THEN I AM...
...USELESS TO YOU NOW?
HER REACTIONS ARE FUNNY TO THE END.
YOU DID A GOOD JOB. THANK YOU.
......
NO, I WANT TO GO WITH YOU.

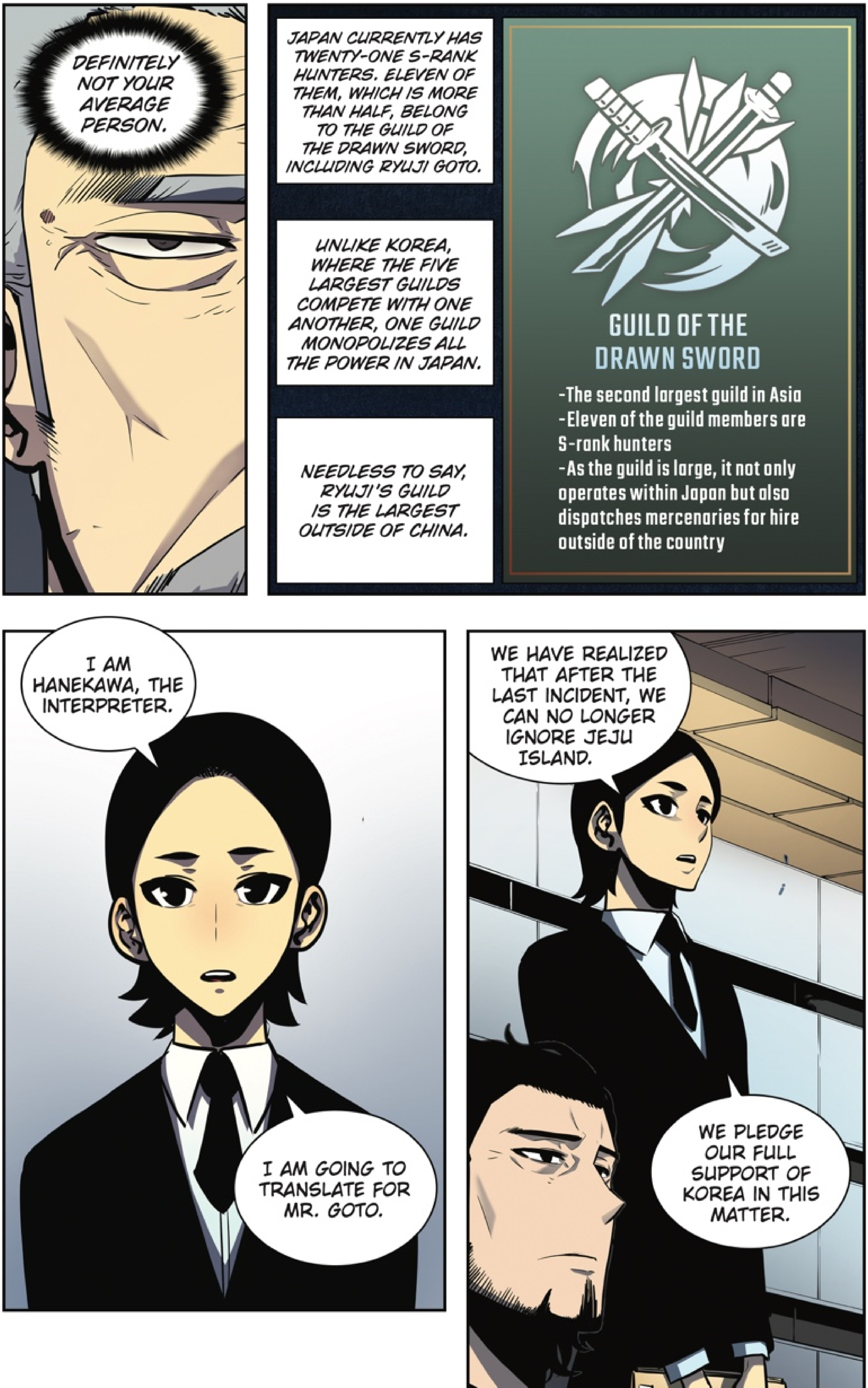
I WANT TO SEE...
...WHAT KIND OF RESULT YOU'LL GET.
AS YOU WISH.
Teleporting to Floor 98.


CHAPTER 15
The Alliance

Solo Leveling

INCHEON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
<It's quite busy here.>
RYUJI GOTO, S-RANK HUNTER
<...There's a powerful presence nearby.>
<More powerful than you?>
<There's no such person in Korea.>
<My apologies! I was running a little late. It's so hectic here today.>

<It's fine. But may I ask what's going on here?>
<Oh... nothing, nothing. A hunter from the US is visiting.>
<I was told it was a personal matter. Nothing to worry about.>
<A hunter from the US...Does it have anything to do with why we're here?>
<Please come with me.>
SO THIS IS...
...THE ONLY HUNTER WHO CAN MATCH ZHIGANG LIU IN ALL OF ASIA...
...RYUJI GOTO.


DEFINITELY NOT YOUR AVERAGE PERSON.
JAPAN CURRENTLY HAS TWENTY-ONE S-RANK HUNTERS. ELEVEN OF THEM, WHICH IS MORE THAN HALF, BELONG TO THE GUILD OF THE DRAWN SWORD, INCLUDING RYUJI GOTO.
UNLIKE KOREA, WHERE THE FIVE LARGEST GUILDS COMPETE WITH ONE ANOTHER, ONE GUILD MONOPOLIZES ALL THE POWER IN JAPAN.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, RYUJI'S GUILD IS THE LARGEST OUTSIDE OF CHINA.
GUILD OF THE DRAWN SWORD
-The second largest guild in Asia
-Eleven of the guild members are S-rank hunters
-As the guild is large, it not only operates within Japan but also dispatches mercenaries for hire outside of the country
I AM HANEKAWA, THE INTERPRETER.
I AM GOING TO TRANSLATE FOR MR. GOTO.
WE HAVE REALIZED THAT AFTER THE LAST INCIDENT, WE CAN NO LONGER IGNORE JEJU ISLAND.
WE PLEDGE OUR FULL SUPPORT OF KOREA IN THIS MATTER.

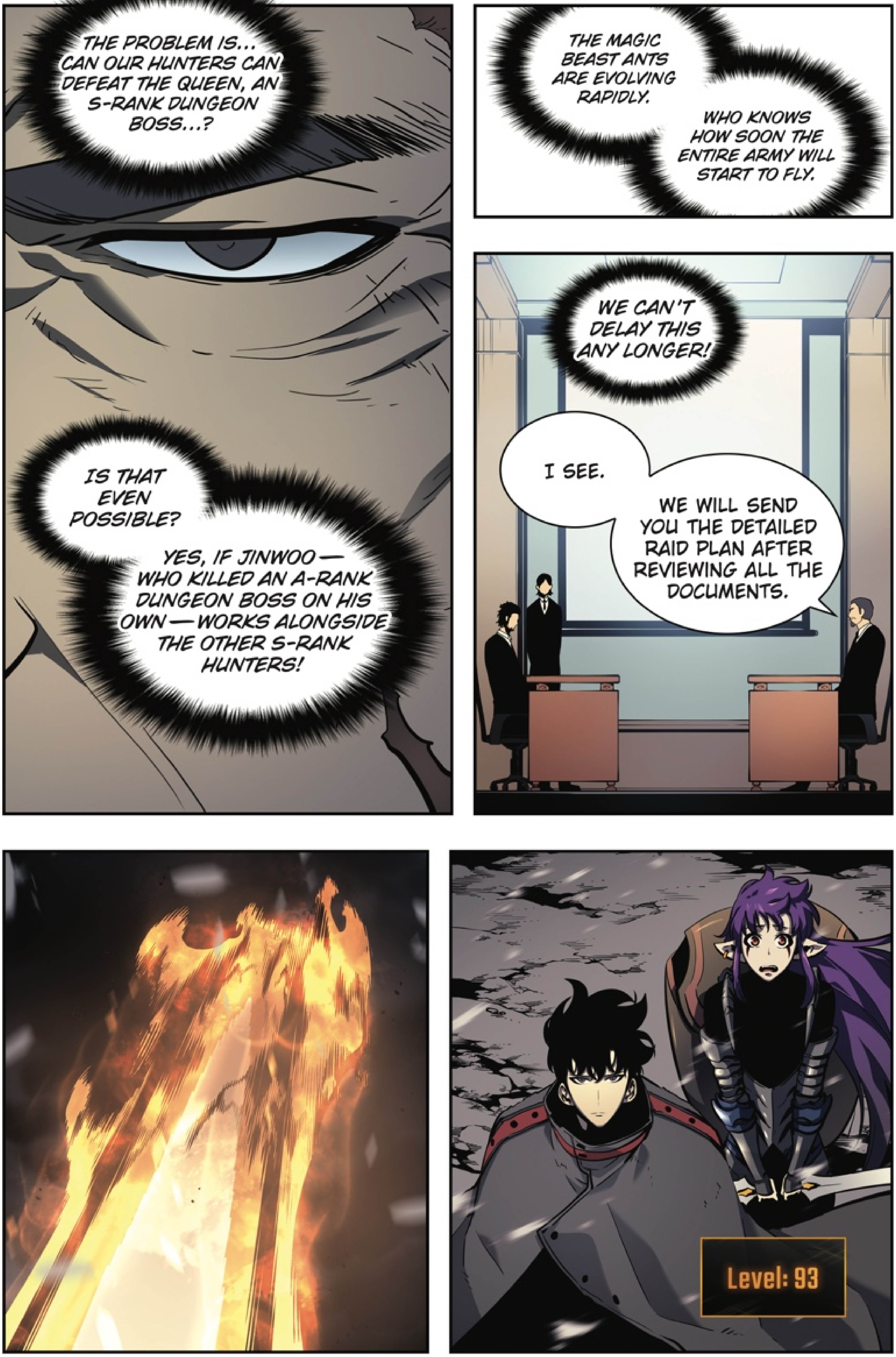
FULL SUPPORT?
<In short, the reason for my visit is...>
<What about a combined strike squad with the highest-ranked hunters?>
AN ALLIED STRIKE TEAM?
ARE YOU SUGGESTING WE FORM AN ALLIANCE TO DEAL WITH THE ANTS?
<That is correct.>
WE KNOW THAT JAPAN'S BEST HUNTERS ARE FORMIDABLE.
BUT IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO ATTACK JEJU ISLAND DIRECTLY.
<Since the target is an S-rank gate, we have prepared a plan.>
SHF

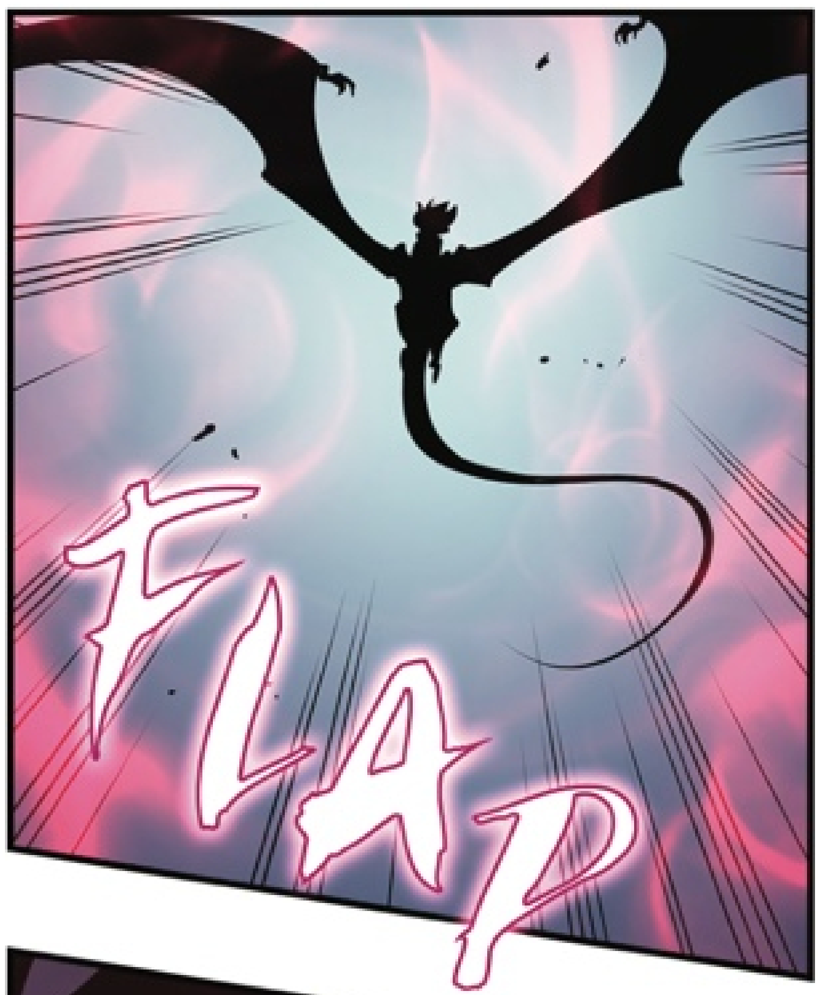
THIS CONTAINS ALL OUR INTEL ON THESE ANTS.
THE ANTS ARE AS POWERFUL AS HIGH-RANK HUNTERS, BUT THEY HAVE A WEAKNESS.
<Their life span.>
<The ants only live for one year.>
<In other words, once we eliminate the queen ant, all the other ants on Jeju Island will naturally die off within a year.>
IF THE QUEEN ANT IS ELIMINATED...
THAT MIGHT SOUND MORE FEASIBLE THAN TRYING TO GET RID OF ALL THE ANTS.
BUT GOING AFTER THE QUEEN WOULD REQUIRE THE SAME EFFORT.
YOU DO REALIZE THAT THE ANTS WILL SACRIFICE THEIR OWN LIVES FOR THEIR QUEEN?

<Yes. You have to get past their defenses in order to get to the queen ant.>
<But it's a different story if all of the ants leave the hive for a while.>
<Which they have. Exactly three times.>
<When Korean hunters arrived on Jeju Island...>
<...the ants emptied the caves to face them—all three times.>
HOW COULD THAT BE?!!
IT'S BEEN CONFIRMED BY MAGIC-DETECTING SKILLS. YOU MAY REFERENCE THE DOCUMENTS FOR DETAILS.
<Ten of the eleven S-rank hunters from my guild, including me...>
<...will join the Jeju Island raid.>

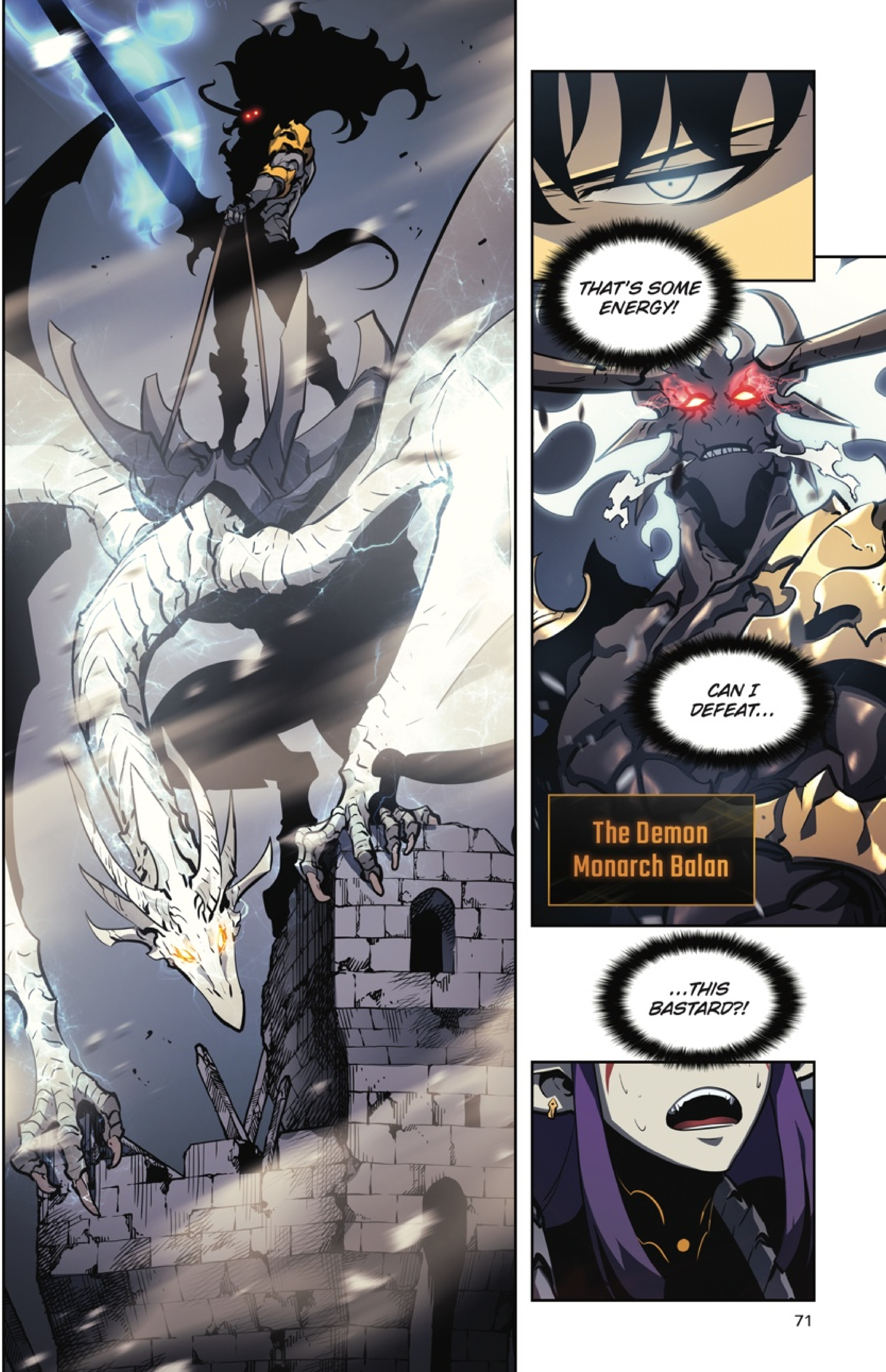
<The Japanese hunters will draw out the ants.>
<Korea's best hunters can then take care of the queen.>
<The rest of our members will be in Korea soon.>
DID HE SAY TEN S-RANK HUNTERS INCLUDING HIMSELF?!
WITH TEN S-RANK HUNTERS DRAWING THE ANTS' ATTENTION, THAT WOULD LEAVE THE QUEEN AND ONLY A FEW ANTS WITHIN THE CAVES.
<Our S-rank hunters will be divided into groups and invade the island from different directions. The ants will rush to defend.>
<Just like before, the cave with the queen will be vacated.>
<The Korean hunters will deploy by helicopter, remove the queen, then take the helicopter back.>
IT JUST MIGHT WORK.
BUT WHY IS GOTO GOING SO FAR AS BRINGING ALMOST ALL OF THEIR S-RANK HUNTERS?

<All the national-level hunters have attacked S-rank gates.>
<Considering my record, once the Jeju Island raid is done...>
<...I will inevitably be considered a national-level hunter.>
<Simply having a national-level hunter will benefit Japan.>
<Since it's an S-rank gate, ten will join the raid out of an abundance of caution.>
<We're needed to mitigate the danger in this situation.>
<There's no way Korea will reject this offer.>
HAAH...
<It's not ideal, but I need this to happen to get national-level hunter status.>
KOREA ONLY HAS EIGHT S-RANK HUNTERS.
ONLY SIX CAN ACTUALLY PARTICIPATE, BECAUSE I HAVE MOBILITY ISSUES AND BYUNGGU MIN IS RETIRED.
FLIP
THE KOREAN HUNTERS ALONE CAN'T DISTRACT SEVERAL THOUSAND ANTS.


THE PROBLEM IS... CAN OUR HUNTERS CAN DEFEAT THE QUEEN, AN S-RANK DUNGEON BOSS...?
IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?
YES, IF JINWOO— WHO KILLED AN A-RANK DUNGEON BOSS ON HIS OWN—WORKS ALONGSIDE THE OTHER S-RANK HUNTERS!
THE MAGIC BEAST ANTS ARE EVOLVING RAPIDLY.
WHO KNOWS HOW SOON THE ENTIRE ARMY WILL START TO FLY.
WE CAN'T DELAY THIS ANY LONGER!
I SEE.
WE WILL SEND YOU THE DETAILED RAID PLAN AFTER REVIEWING ALL THE DOCUMENTS.
Level: 93

FLOOR ONE
HUNDRED.

FLAP

THUD


THAT'S SOME ENERGY!
CAN I DEFEAT...
The Demon Monarch Balan
...THIS BASTARD?!

WHAT IS THIS SCATHING, MURDEROUS ENERGY?
I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE.
SO THAT'S THE DEMON MONARCH BALAN!
EVEN ESIL CAN SENSE...
...THE ENERGY THAT GUY IS SPEWING.
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
A MONSTER WITH THE POWER OF FLIGHT... THAT'S GONNA BE TROUBLE.
Kaisellin the Wyvern
WYVERN?
ANOTHER NON-DEMON OTHER THAN THE HORSE ESIL RODE...
MAYBE MOUNTS DON'T COUNT?

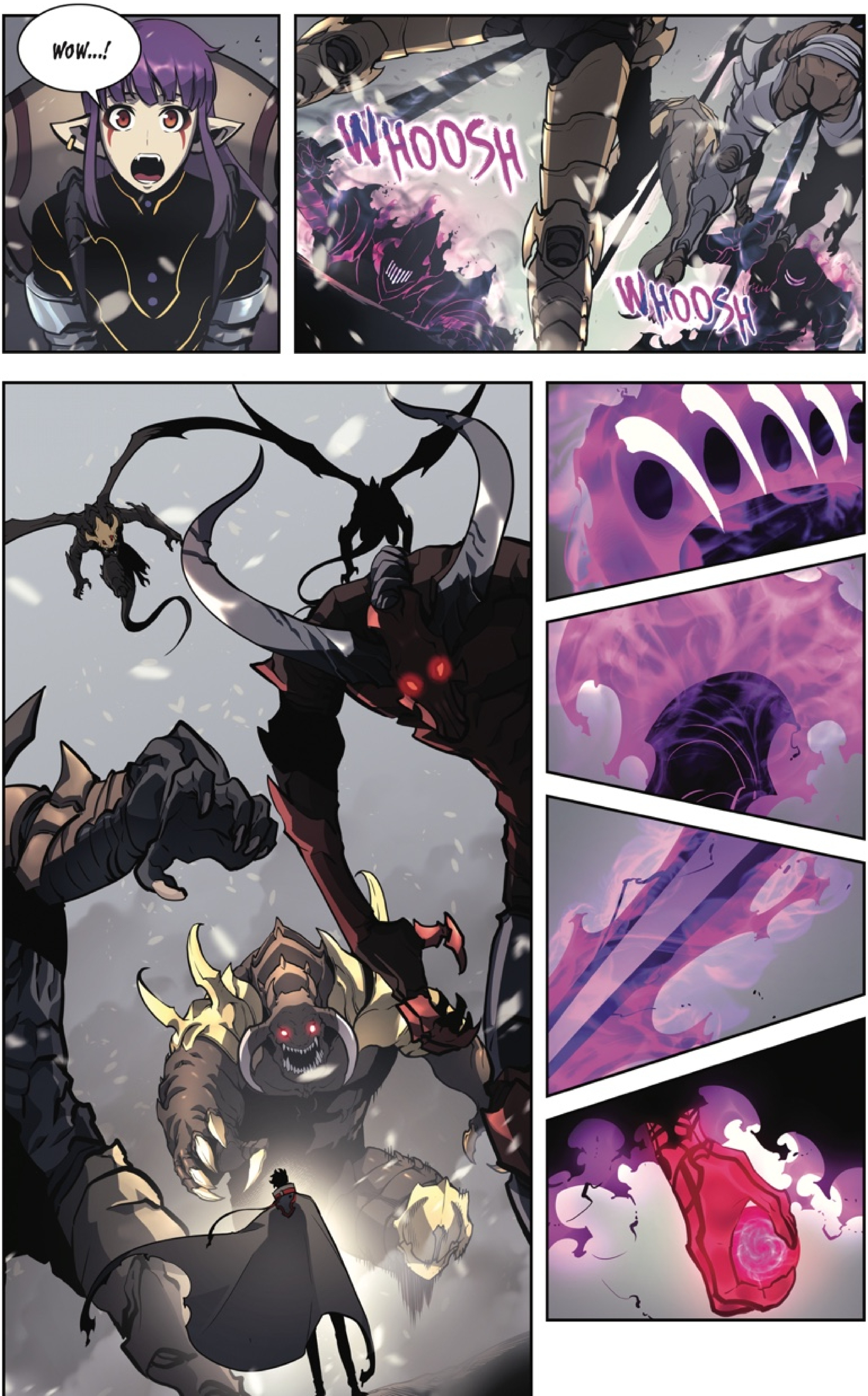
WAIT... IF IT'S NOT A DEMON...
...THEN MAYBE I CAN EXTRACT ITS SHADOW...
The Demon Monarch Balan has used [Skill: Army of Hell].
VMM
VWOOM
Demon soldiers have been summoned!
Demon knights have been summoned!
Demon generals have been summoned!

A KNIGHT OR A GENERAL IS AN A- OR HIGHER RANK MONSTER...
LOOKS LIKE THERE ARE MORE THAN A HUNDRED OF THEM!
EVEN AT A GLANCE, IT SEEMS MORE THAN A THOUSAND.
IS THIS IT?
JINWOO, SIR... WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
JINWOO, SIR!!

NOT YET...
RUSH

[Skill: Monarch's Domain]
has been activated.

COME ON OUT!!
SHHK
SHHK
SHUNK
SHHK
SHUNK
SHOONK
SHUNK
SHUNK
SHHHK


WOW...!
WHOOSH
WHOOSH

WHAM
KRAK

GRAAAAH!

SHHK
SHHK
LEAP

Fang uses [Skill: Song of Inferno].

KABOOOOM

AMAZING...
ON ALL THE HIGH FLOORS I'VE BEEN WITH HIM, I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS.

BUT...THAT'S THE DEMON MONARCH BALAN.
THE RULER OF THIS REALM.

AND THAT MAN IS AN INTRUDER HERE.
HE'S A TARGET FOR ELIMI-NATION.

I...
WHO SHOULD I SIDE WITH?

ZZZT
ZZZZT
BZZZZT

KRA
CRACKLE
KOOM

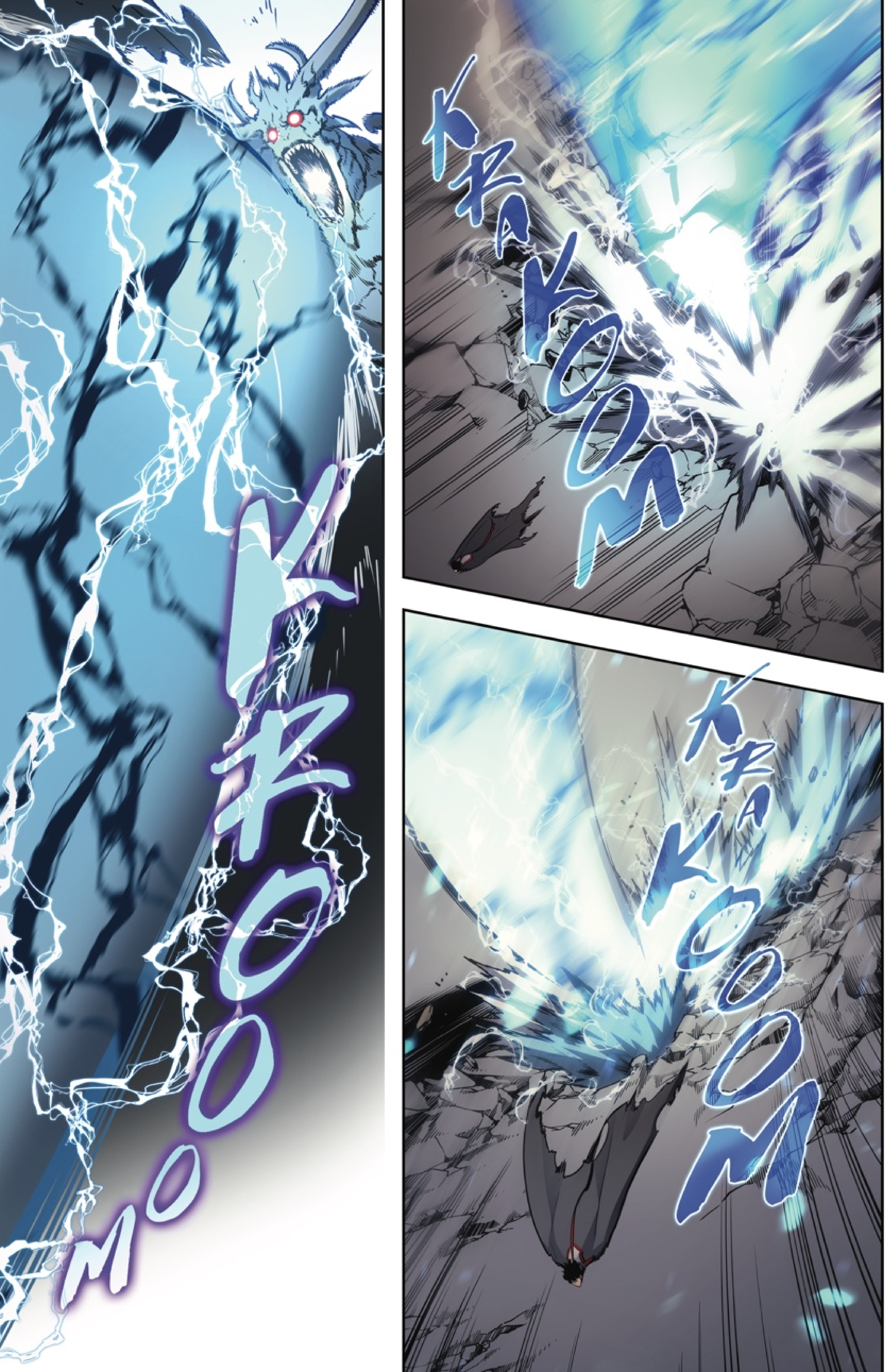
KRA
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
KOOOM

THIS ISN'T ORDINARY LIGHTNING!
The irregular status condition has been removed by [Buff: Immunity].
ZZZT
ZZZT
IT'S WIDE-RANGE MAGIC WITH A STUN DEBUFF.
IF I DON'T BLOCK IT, MY SHADOW SOLDIERS WILL BE RIPPED APART LIKE PAPER. THEN MY MANA WILL HIT ROCK BOTTOM.
The irregular status condition has been removed by [Buff: Immunity].
ZZZT
ZZZT

A WING FIRST...!
TMP
TMP
WHAK

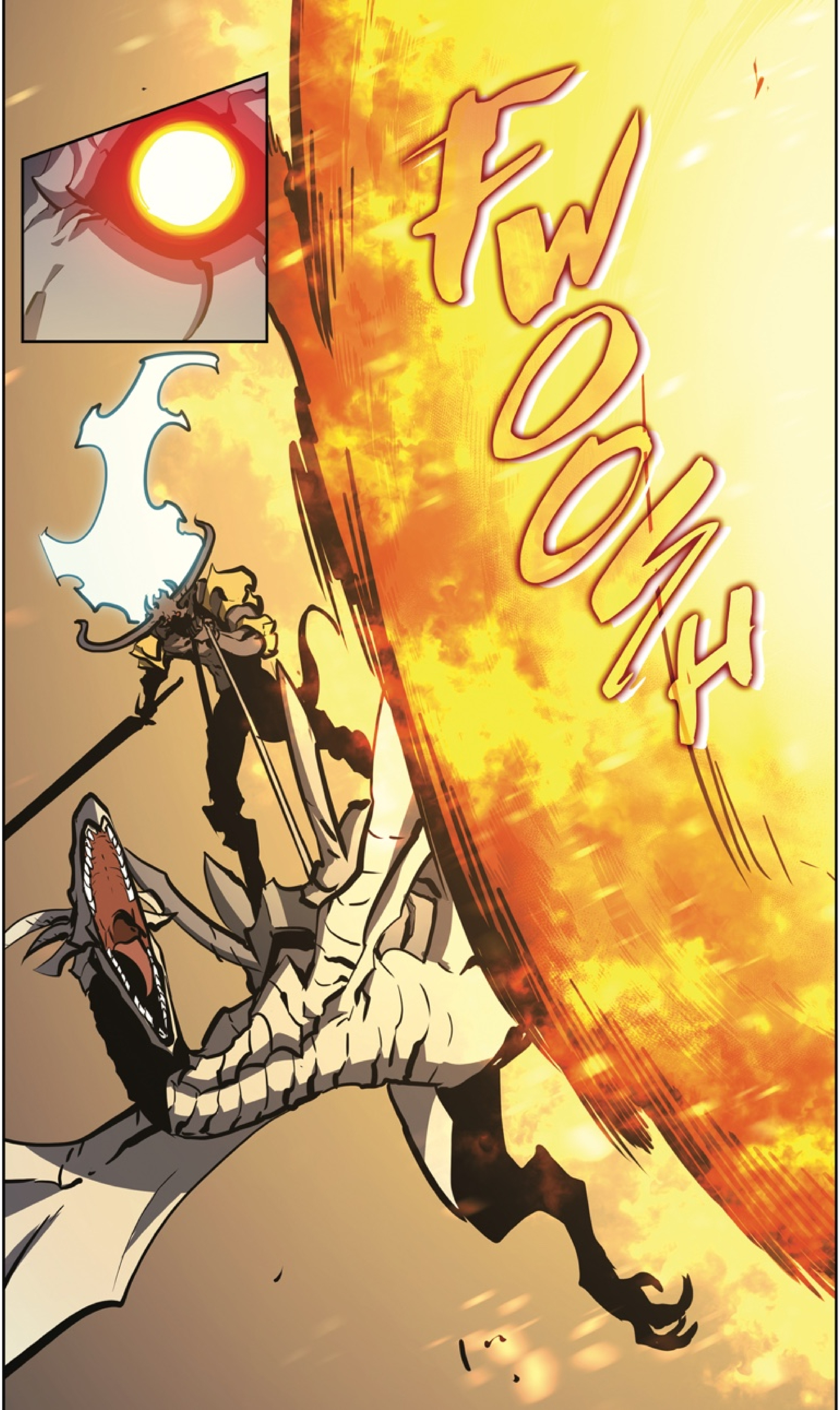
FLINCH
KLANG

CRASH
GUH...!
ZZZZZT


KRAKOOOOM
KRAKOOM
KRAKOOOM

IT'S FAST... I'LL GET CAUGHT!
THE ROBE MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH TO BLOCK...!
BOOOOOM

BOOOOM
KABLAM

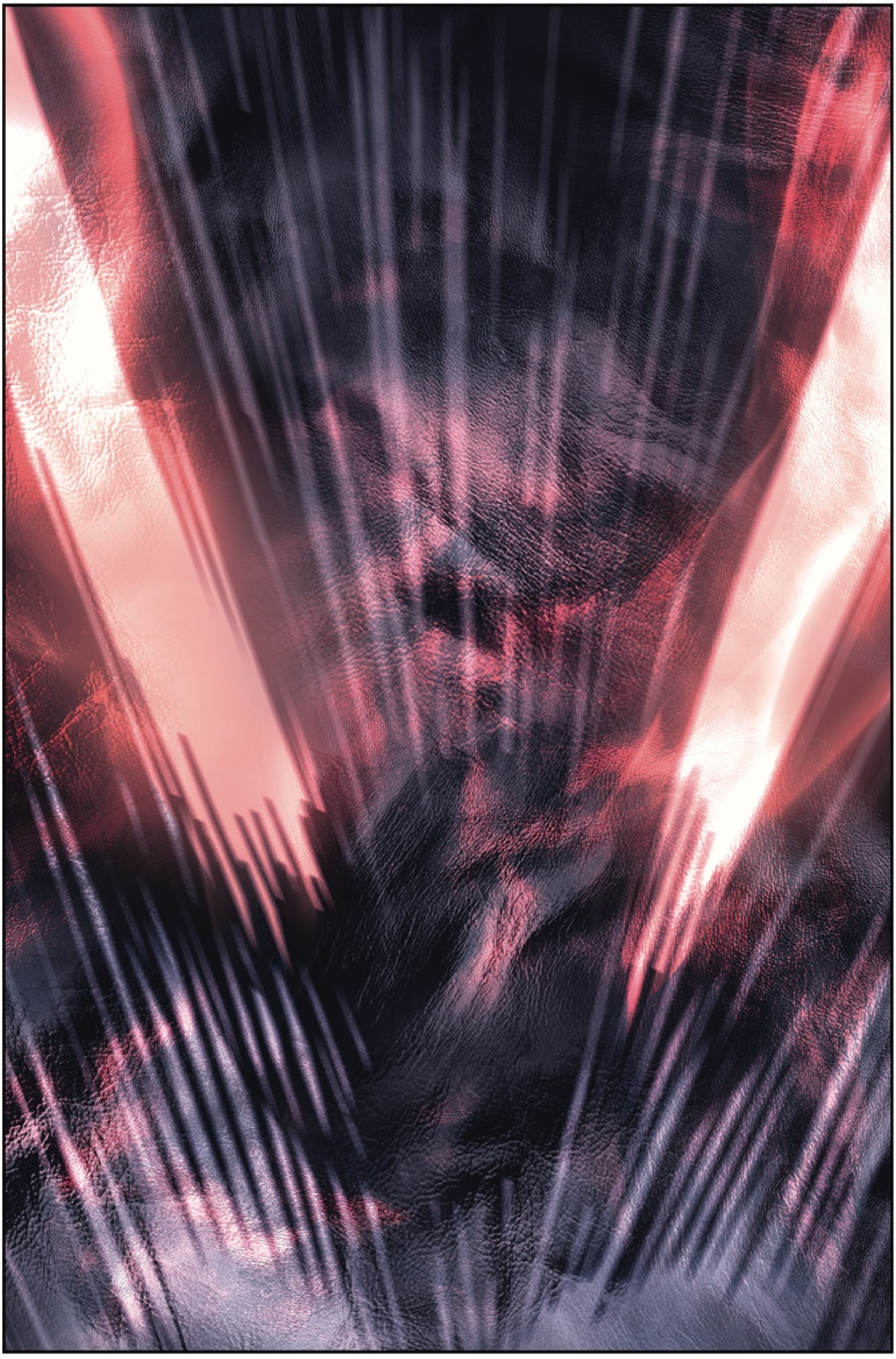

FWOOOSH

IT WAS WORTH IT TO LET FANG HAVE THE SPHERE.
WHUD
YOU'RE FINALLY ON THE GROUND.
LOOKING UP...

...WAS TIRING ME OUT.
SOME SKILLS DON'T CONSUME MANA.
THE RULER'S HAND AND SHADOW SOLDIERS, FOR EXAMPLE.
SKILL
Ruler's Hand Lv. 2
Active skill.
No mana required.
The user can physically manipulate objects without touching them.
SKILL
Shadow Storage Lv. 2
Job-exclusive skill.
No mana required.
Shadow soldiers can be stored by absorbing them into the caster's shadow. Stored soldiers can be summoned or reabsorbed at any time.
Shadows stored: 20/30
RULER'S HAND PHYSICALLY AFFECTS AN OBJECT, BUT...
...IT DOESN'T CONSUME ANY MANA. ITS EFFECTIVENESS IS BASED SOLELY ON THE WEIGHT OF THE OBJECT.
AS A SOLDIER THAT'S ALREADY BEING STORED, A SHADOW SOLDIER DOESN'T CONSUME ANY MANA EITHER.

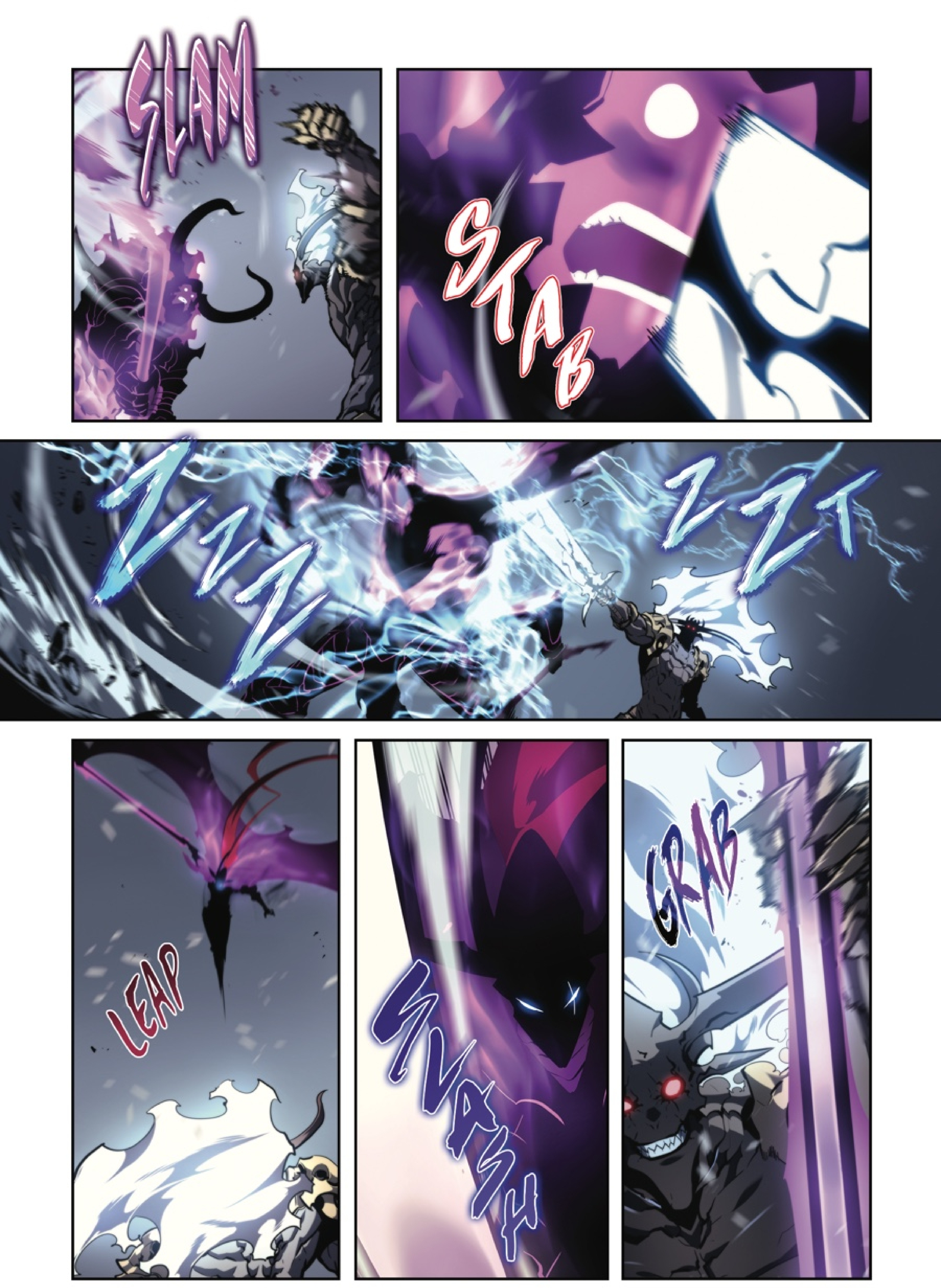
HOWEVER, IT'S A DIFFERENT STORY WHEN A SHADOW SOLDIER IS DESTROYED.
RESTORING A DESTROYED SOLDIER CONSUMES MANA.
AND WHEN MANA RUNS OUT, A SHADOW SOLDIER DOESN'T GET RESTORED— IT'S ABSORBED INTO THE SHADOW.
THAT'S WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO IMPROVE THE INTELLIGENCE STAT TO INCREASE THE ABSOLUTE QUANTITY OF MANA.

THE BASTARD HAS INCREDIBLY HIGH COMBAT POWER AND MANA.
HOW DO HIS SOLDIERS MOVE ABOUT?
IF BALAN'S SOLDIERS CAN'T BE RESTORED AND HE KEEPS SUMMONING THEM, HE'LL USE UP A HUGE AMOUNT OF MAGIC POWER...!
MP: 3,261 / 7,270



FWOOOM

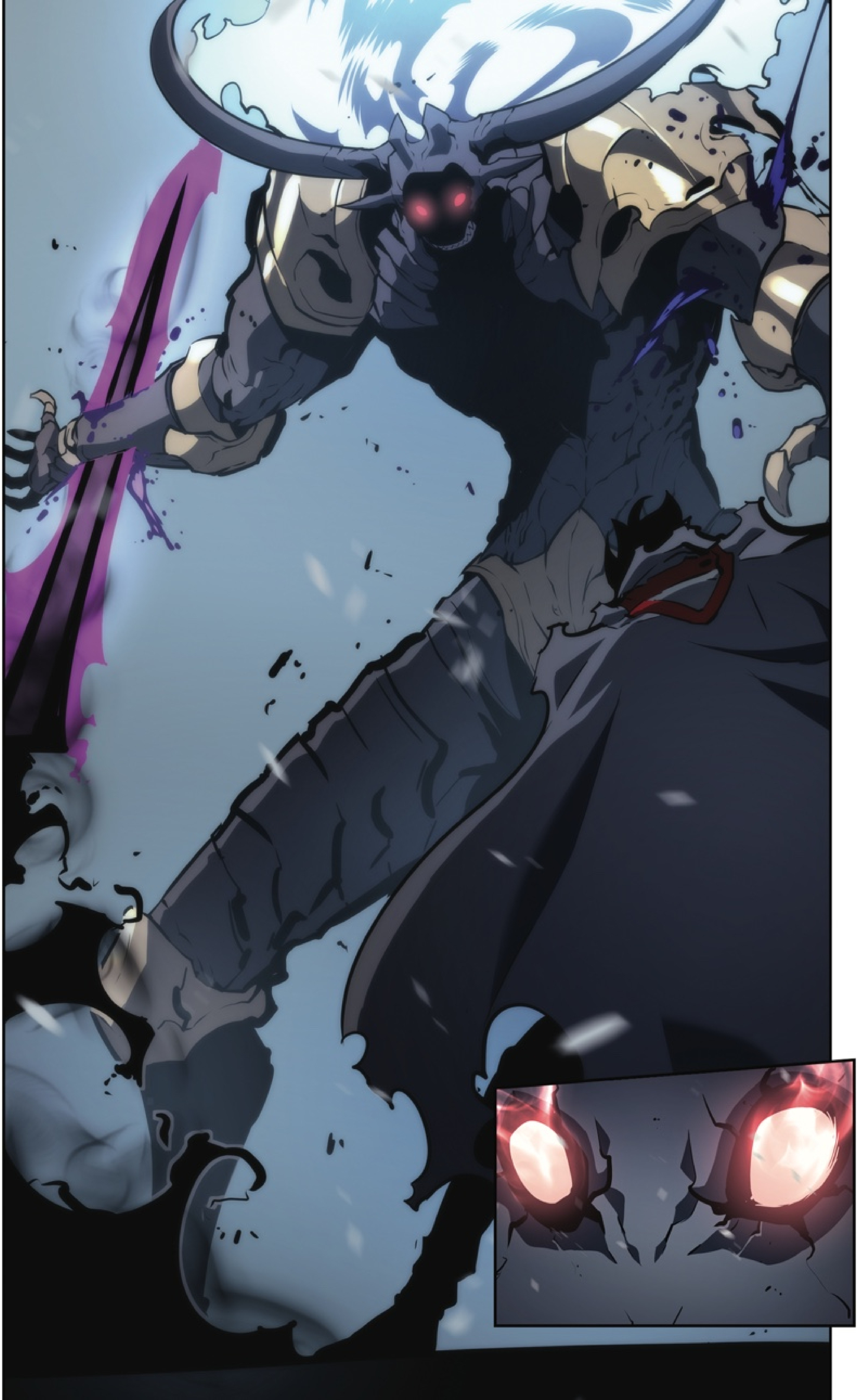
Fang uses [Skill: Song of Protection].
KRIK
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
MANA IS GETTING LOW.
THIS DEMON DOESN'T GIVE ME TIME TO REFILL IT!
MP: 2,948 / 7,270
CONSUMPTION OF MANA INCREASES WHEN A HIGHER-RANK SOLDIER GETS DESTROYED.
I STILL NEED HELP FROM MY SOLDIERS...
I HAVE TO FINISH THE BATTLE BEFORE MY MANA RUNS OUT!
GRAAAH!


SLAM
STAB
ZZZZ
ZZZT
LEAP
SWASH
GRAB

FWOOOOM

[Skill: Fatal Strike] has been activated.
KLANG
HE BLOCKED FATAL STRIKE?!
GRAB

KLANG
SHHK
SHHHHK
FSHHH



KRAAA
AAAAH!

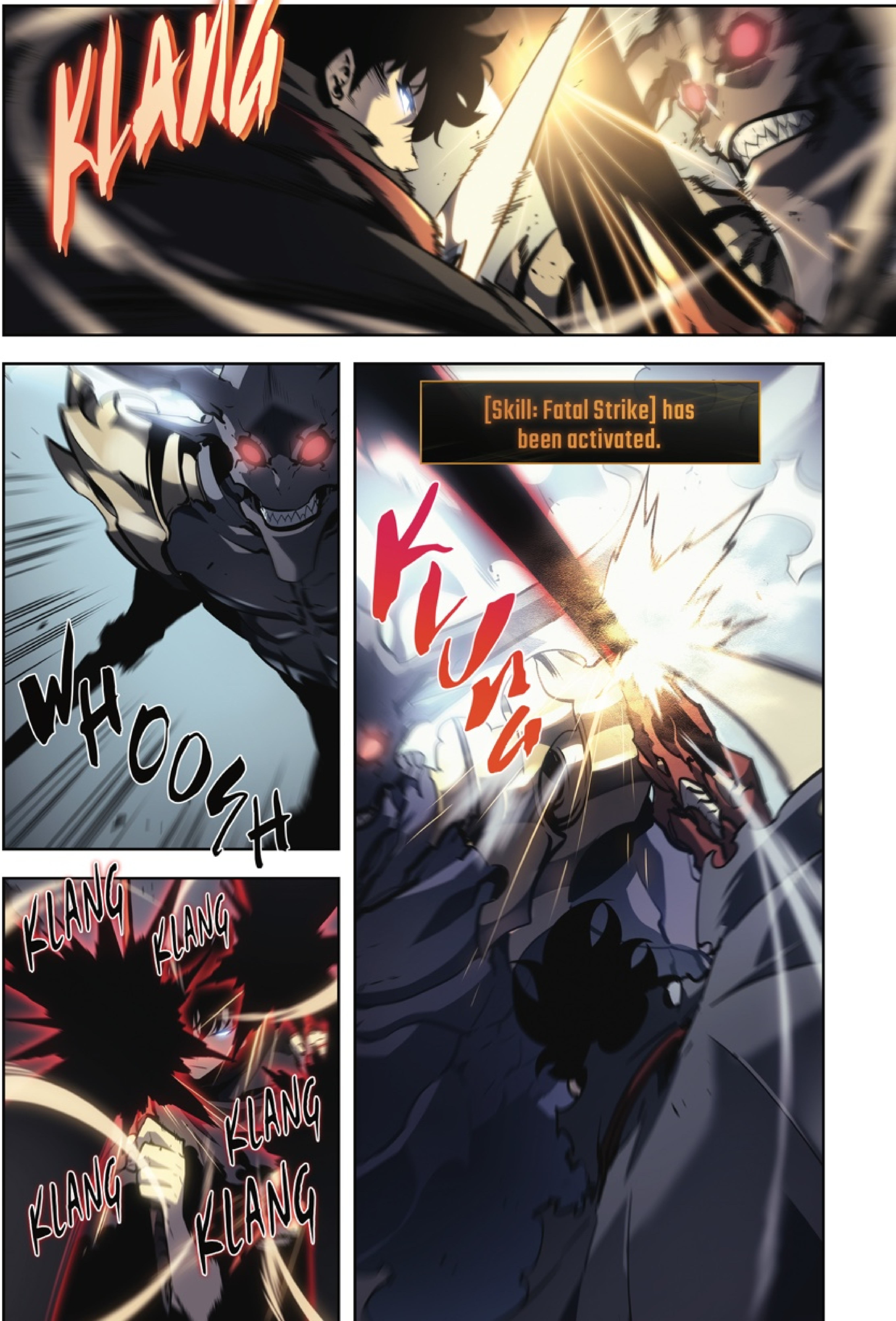
BOOM

ZZZ
ZZZ

ZZZ
ZZT
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

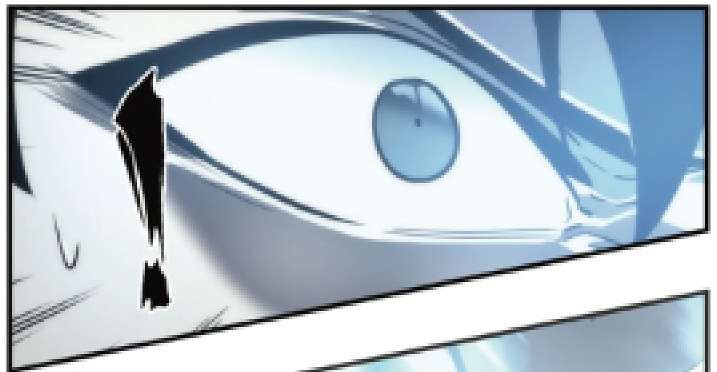
GRIP

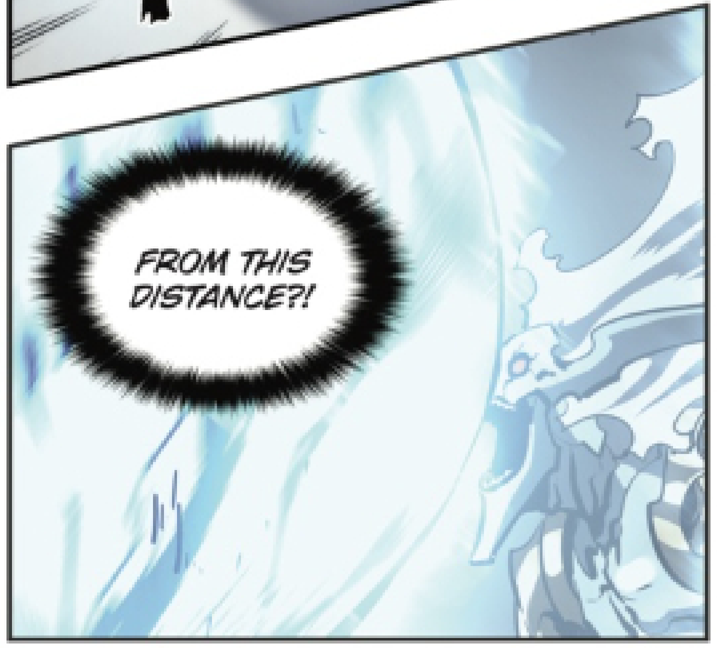
ZOOOM


KLANG
WHOOSH
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
[Skill: Fatal Strike] has been activated.
KLUNG

KLAANG
KLANG
KA-KLANG
KLANG

ZZZZZT


!


FROM THIS DISTANCE?!

KROOOM
KLANG
KLANG

KLINK KLANK

KLANG
TWIRL
TWIRL
DAMN IT! THE DAGGER IS...!
WHOOOSH

GRAB
ZZZT
ZZZT
MORE? DOES THIS DEMON HAVE INFINITE MANA?
UGH... TOO MUCH POWER!
STRAIN
ZZZZT
RUMBLE
ZZZZT

KLANG
TWIRL
!!
SHIVER
SHIVER

FWIP
I HAVE TO STRIKE NOW!
WITH THE STRENGTH STAT I'VE INVESTED SO MUCH IN...
...AND THE RULER'S HAND COMBINED TOGETHER!
[Skill: Ruler's Hand] has been activated.

RIIIIIIP

LET'S...

...FINISH THIS ALREADY!

KA
POW

JINWOO, SIR...
You have defeated the Demon Monarch Balan.
THUD
You have acquired Balan's soul.
You have completed [Quest: Collect Demon Souls (2)].

JINWOO, SIR!
DASH
ESIL.
PLOP
TELL YOUR FATHER.
RADIS CLAN IS NOW THE NUMBER-ONE FAMILY.
JINWOO, SIR...

OUR FAMILY NAME IS RADIR.
Jinwoo Sung
Level: 97

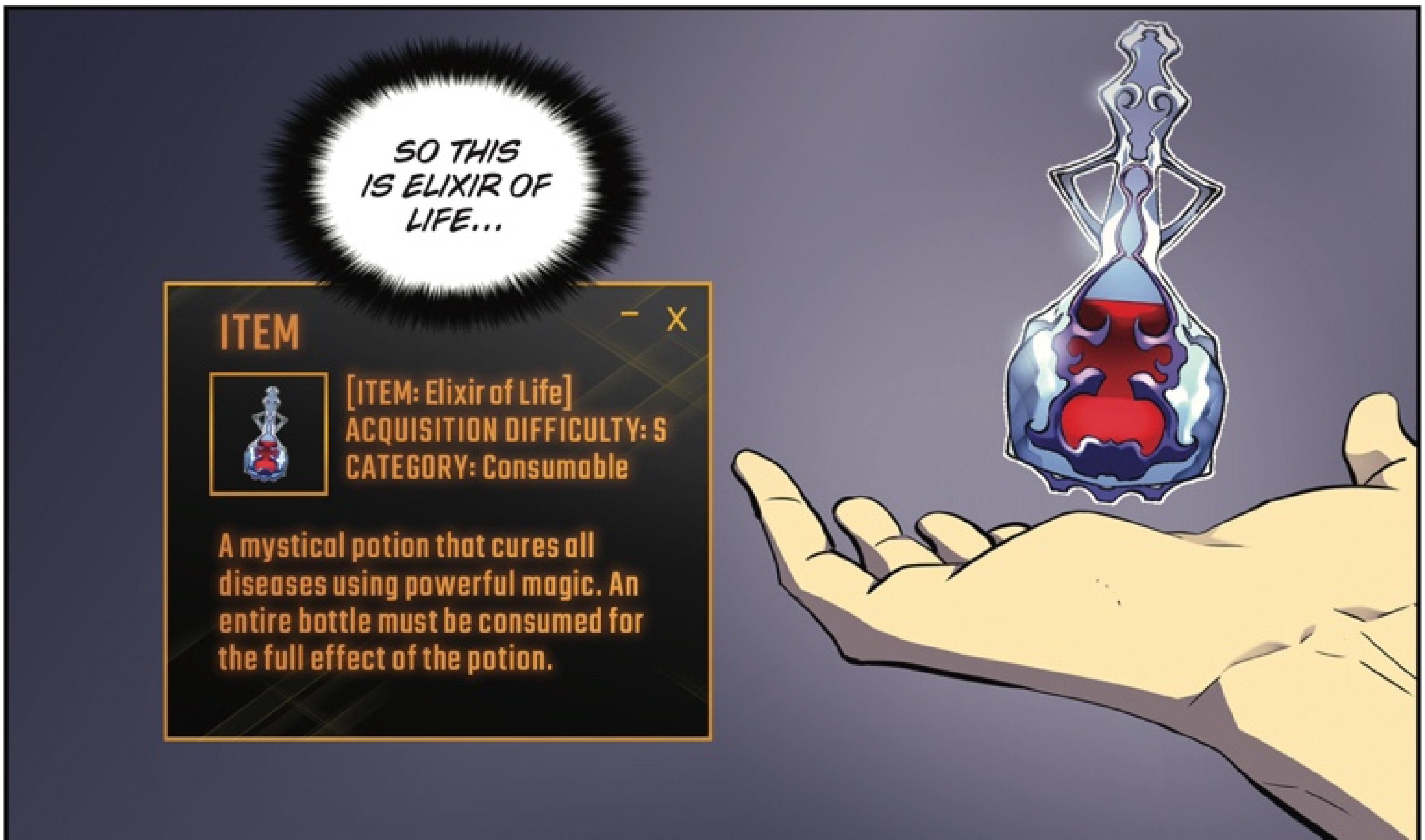
You have discovered
[Item: Demon Monarch's Sword].
ITEM
[ITEM: Demon Monarch's Sword]
ACQUISITION DIFFICULTY: S
CATEGORY: Sword
Attack Power +350
This sword contains the power of the Demon Monarch Balan. Whenever you swing the sword, [Buff: Storm of White Lightning] will be applied.
—BUFF: Storm of White Lightning: Stirs up a storm with never-ending lightning in a certain area.
You have discovered 2
[Item: Demon Monarch's Dagger].
ITEM
[ITEM: Demon Monarch's Dagger]
ACQUISITION DIFFICULTY: S
CATEGORY: Dagger
Attack Power +220
A dagger acquired from the Demon Monarch Balan. When you use both Demon Monarch's Daggers, the set buff will be applied.
—SET BUFF: Two in One: Extra attack power equal to the current strength stat will be added to each dagger.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
You have discovered
[Item: Demon Monarch's Ring].
You have discovered 2
[Item: Balan's Horn].
You have discovered [Material Item: Purified Blood of the Demon Monarch].
SLIDE
DEMON MONARCH'S RING!
THIS ACTIVATES A SET BUFF.
ITEM
[ITEM: Demon Monarch's Ring]
ACQUISITION DIFFICULTY: S
CATEGORY: Accessory
Agility +20, Intelligence +20
There are set buffs that will be revealed when worn with:
Demon Monarch's Earrings (wearing)
Demon Monarch's Necklace (wearing)
Set Buff 1. All stats +5
Set Buff 2. All stats +10

SET ITEM EFFECT
PING!
LV. 1
Set Buff 1. All stats +5
Set Buff 2. All stats +10
THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE SET ITEMS.
You have discovered [Material Item: Purified Blood of the Demon Monarch].
ITEM
[MATERIAL ITEM: Purified Blood of Demon Monarch]
ACQUISITION DIFFICULTY: ??
CATEGORY: Material
This liquid was made by purifying the blood of the Demon Monarch Balan.
It possesses powerful magic but still contains traces of poison even after purification, so the materials World Tree Fragment and Spring Water from Echo Forest are required in order to neutralize the poison and use it as medicine.
PURIFIED BLOOD OF THE DEMON MONARCH.
CRAFT
Consumable: Elixir of Life (3/3)

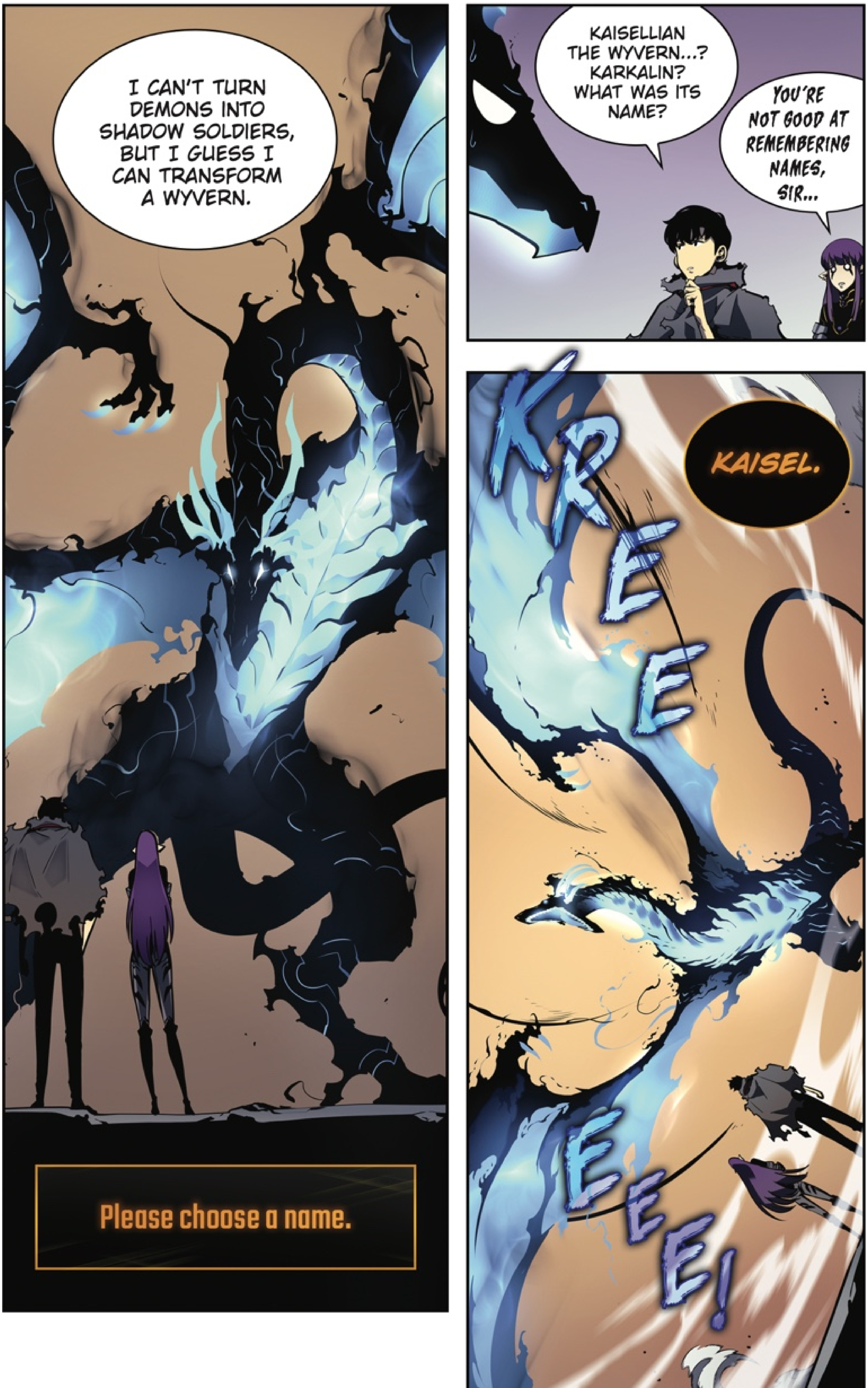
ARE YOU OKAY, JINWOO, SIR?
Would you like to craft [Item: Elixir of Life]?
CRAFT.
Crafting [Item: Elixir of Life].
Crafting...
The rate of success and item quantity will vary based on the crafter's intelligence level.
10
9
DOES THAT REALLY SAY THE RATE OF SUCCESS AND ITEM QUANTITY DEPEND ON MY INTELLIGENCE LEVEL?
IF I'D KNOWN THAT, I WOULD'VE INVESTED ALL POINTS IN THE INTELLIGENCE STAT...
8
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE CRAFTING ABILITY? YOU'LL BE FINE.
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

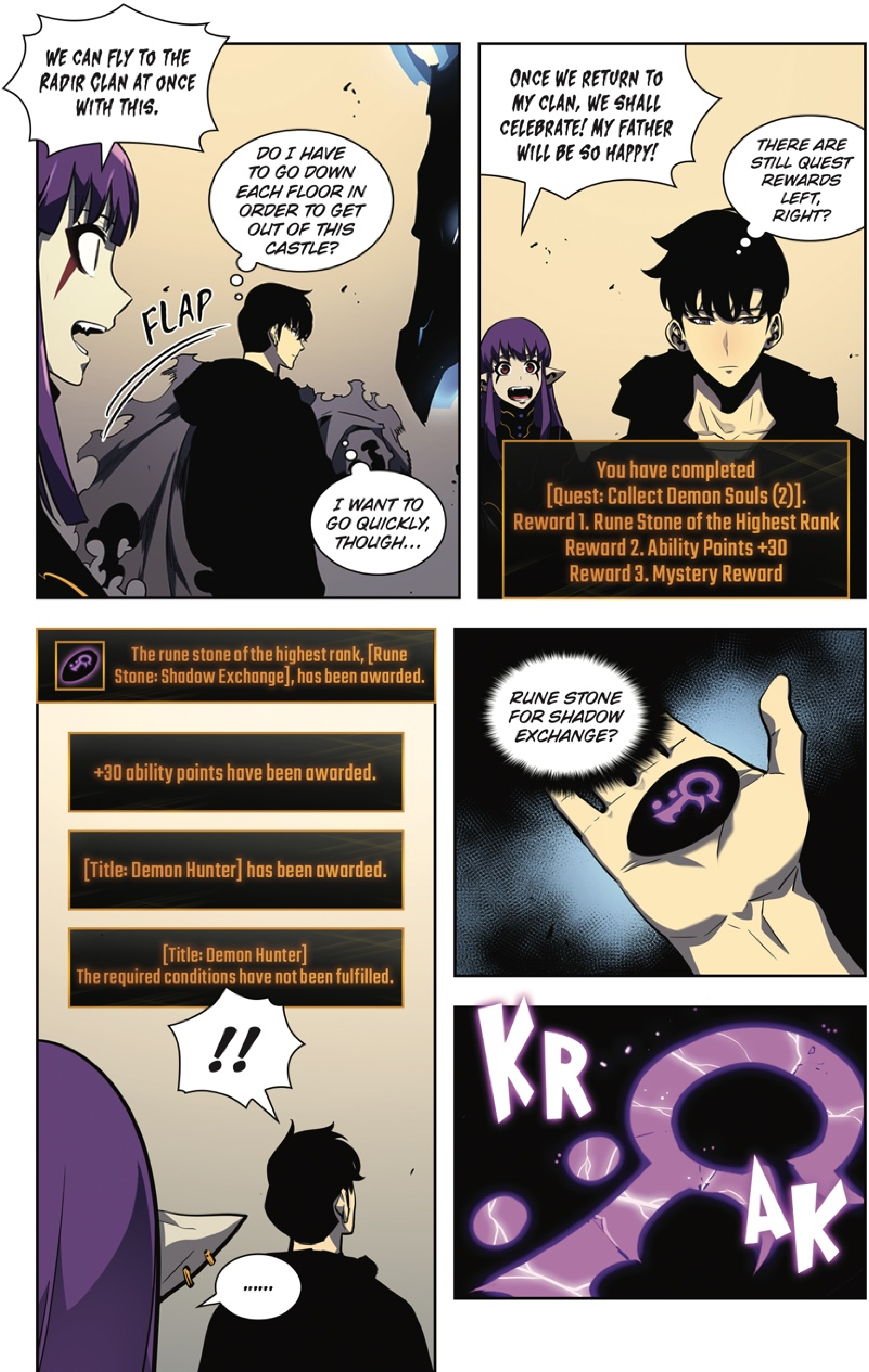
Crafting was successful!
You have acquired 6 [Item: Elixir of Life]!
YES!

HUH? THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD DECREASED A LITTLE BIT...
...THE WORLD TREE FRAGMENT IS MISSING A CHUNK, AND THE SPRING WATER FROM ECHO FOREST IS GONE.
MATERIALS
Purified Blood of the Demon Monarch (1/1)
World Tree Fragment (1/1)
Spring Water from Echo Forest (0/1)
I GUESS IT USES ONLY THE AMOUNT NECESSARY INSTEAD OF THE ENTIRE ITEM?


SO THIS IS ELIXIR OF LIFE...
ITEM
– X
[ITEM: Elixir of Life]
ACQUISITION DIFFICULTY: S
CATEGORY: Consumable
A mystical potion that cures all diseases using powerful magic. An entire bottle must be consumed for the full effect of the potion.

DRAG
DRAG DRAG
WILL THIS ITEM ACTUALLY CURE MY MOTHER?
I NEED TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL TO FIND OUT!
IRON, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
THAT'S PRETTY IMPRESSIVE.
FWIP
ARISE.
VWOOM
JINWOO, SIR, THAT'S...!


I CAN'T TURN DEMONS INTO SHADOW SOLDIERS, BUT I GUESS I CAN TRANSFORM A WYVERN.
Please choose a name.
KAISELLIAN THE WYVERN...? KARKALIN? WHAT WAS ITS NAME?
YOU'RE NOT GOOD AT REMEMBERING NAMES, SIR...
KREEEEEEE!
KAISEL.


WE CAN FLY TO THE RADIR CLAN AT ONCE WITH THIS.
DO I HAVE TO GO DOWN EACH FLOOR IN ORDER TO GET OUT OF THIS CASTLE?
FLAP
I WANT TO GO QUICKLY, THOUGH...
ONCE WE RETURN TO MY CLAN, WE SHALL CELEBRATE! MY FATHER WILL BE SO HAPPY!
THERE ARE STILL QUEST REWARDS LEFT, RIGHT?
You have completed [Quest: Collect Demon Souls (2)].
Reward 1. Rune Stone of the Highest Rank
Reward 2. Ability Points +30
Reward 3. Mystery Reward
The rune stone of the highest rank, [Rune Stone: Shadow Exchange], has been awarded.
+30 ability points have been awarded.
[Title: Demon Hunter] has been awarded.
[Title: Demon Hunter]
The required conditions have not been fulfilled.
!!
......
RUNE STONE FOR SHADOW EXCHANGE?
KRAK

SKILL
[Skill: Shadow Exchange Lv. 1]
Job-exclusive skill.
No mana required.
The caster may switch locations with a designated shadow soldier.
Once used, you may activate it again only after a three-hour cooldown period. Wait times can vary depending on skill level.
WHOOSH
THAT SKILL IS INSANE!
I CAN SWAP LOCATIONS WITH ANY SHADOW SOLDIER, NO MATTER THE PLACE!
PACK PACK
THIS SKILL BASICALLY LETS ME TELEPORT!
YOU ALL DID A GOOD JOB.
ESIL, I'M SORRY, BUT YOU HAVE TO GO HOME ON YOUR OWN.
EH? WHAT ABOUT THE CELEBRA-TION...?
RADIS CLAN IS ON THE EIGHTIETH FLOOR.
FWISH
THAT'S TOO FAR FOR A PARTY.
SEE YOU NEXT TIME.

GOOD-BYE.
[Skill: Shadow Exchange] has been activated.
JINWOO, SIR! I...!
HUH?
HAAH...
As the boss has been defeated, the dungeon will now revert to its original state...
THIS IS...?
SHOOM

THIS IS OUR NEIGHBORHOOD, ISN'T IT?
I ACTUALLY CHANGED LOCATIONS.
[Skill: Shadow Exchange Lv. 1]
...may use the skill in 02:59:57.
KAISEL.
TAK
WHOOSH

HERE IS THE INTEL FROM JAPAN.
A MAGIC POWER-DETECTING CAMERA FROM A JAPANESE SATELLITE...
...CAPTURED THIS FOOTAGE.
THE RECORDINGS ARE FROM THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD ATTACKS.
JUST LIKE GOTO SAID, ALL THE ANTS EXCEPT THE QUEEN AND HER GUARDS ARE LEAVING THE COLONY.
THE APPEARANCE OF THE ANTS IS DIFFERENT EACH TIME. LIKELY EVIDENCE OF THE ANTS EVOLVING WITH EACH GENERATION.
THE TIME LINE FOR EACH GENERATION IS A YEAR, THE SAME AS THEIR LIFE SPAN...

ALTHOUGH THE QUEEN'S GUARDS ARE A PAIN IN THE ASS...
...THERE ARE ALWAYS A FEW MAGIC BEASTS GUARDING THE BOSS IN HIGH-RANK DUNGEONS.
HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT THE ANTS WILL RETURN EARLIER THAN ANTICIPATED ONCE THEY REALIZE THE QUEEN IS IN DANGER?
JAPAN SUGGESTED USING A DISRUPTIVE ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE.
DISRUPTIVE ELECTROMAG-NETIC PULSE?
MAGIC BEAST ANTS COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER ON THEIR OWN UNIQUE FREQUENCY.
JAPAN SAYS IT CAN DISRUPT IT BY USING THIS PULSE.
AND ALL WE'D HAVE TO DEAL WITH ARE THE QUEEN AND HER GUARDS...
!!
WHAT'S WRONG, SIR?
JUST NOW... DIDN'T YOU FEEL THAT?

HUGE WAVES OF MANA CAN BE DETECTED EVEN FROM QUITE A DISTANCE.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
ARE YOU STILL UNABLE TO REACH HUNTER JINWOO SUNG?
WE'RE TRYING OUR BEST.
DID YOU FEEL THAT TOO?
I MAY BE RETIRED, BUT I'M STILL THE SAME RANK.
WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT WAS?
MAYBE JONGIN AND HAEIN ARE IN A SHOWDOWN OVER WHO LEADS THE HUNTERS GUILD.
HMM...WELL, HAVE ANOTHER SHOT.
OH, WOW, THANKS.
GLUG GLUG
SMILE, YOONHO.
FROWNING MAKES YOU AGE FASTER.
BYUNGGU MIN, S-RANK HEALER

WANNA HEAR A FUNNY STORY, YOONHO?
NOPE.
OKAY.
BYUNGGU IS KNOWN FOR BEING RATHER ODD AND HAVING A SENSE OF HUMOR TO MATCH.
HE'S PROBABLY THE FIRST S-RANK HUNTER IN THE WORLD TO RETIRE WITH ALL OF HIS LIMBS INTACT.
NOT JUST THE FIRST—HE'S THE ONLY ONE TO DO SO.
AHH...
CONSIDERING HOW MUCH MONEY AN S-RANK CAN EARN, ONE WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND ANOTHER HUNTER WHO'D QUIT JUST BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO CONTINUE.
PORK KIMCHI STEW
SOJU 3,000 WON
IT'S NOT LIKE HE COMES FROM A WELL-TO-DO FAMILY EITHER.
ARE YOU REALLY GOING?
YEAH.

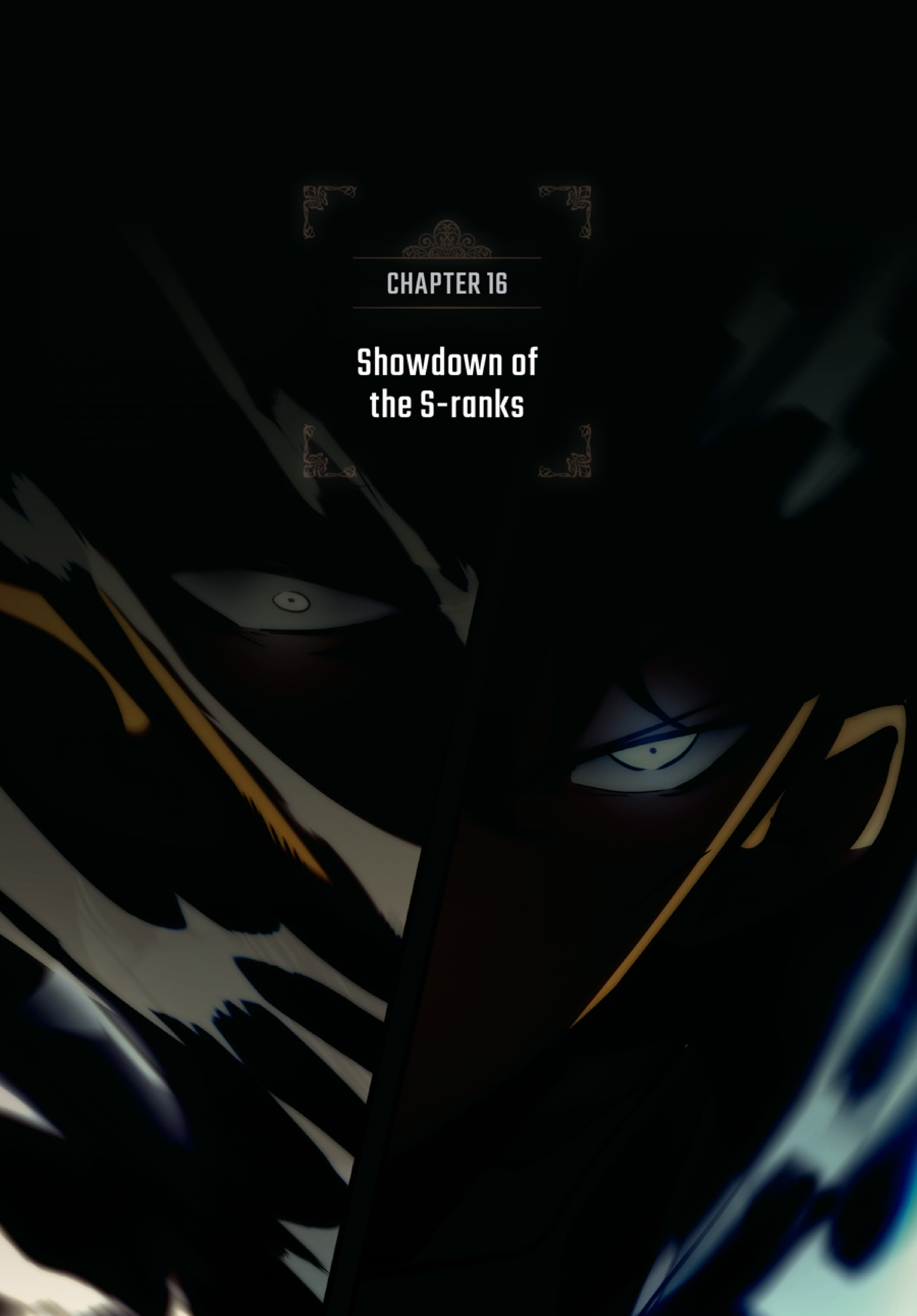
YOU SAW HOW EUNSUK DIED.
ALL THE MORE REASON TO GO BACK.
IF WE LET THOSE ANTS BE, SOON THE WHOLE OF KOREA WILL BE INFESTED.
SINCE WHEN ARE YOU SUCH A PATRIOT...?
I'M MAKING UP A COOL EXCUSE, SINCE I HAVE TO GO ANYWAY.
KLAK
I'M NOT JOINING. I REFUSE TO.
IF YOU'RE HERE TO PERSUADE ME, YOU'RE WAST—
NO, THAT'S NOT IT. I'M HERE TO SAY GOOD-BYE, JUST IN CASE.

I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL GET TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
YOONHO...
I'M PREPARING FOR THE NATIONAL EXAM TO BECOME A TEACHER.
I WANT TO BECOME YOUR AVERAGE GOVERNMENT WORKER.
YOU DO?
YOU KNOW YOOJIN CONSTRUCTION IS TRYING TO RECRUIT TALENTED HUNTERS TO FORM A GUILD, RIGHT?
THEY CONTACTED ME AS WELL, OFFERING THE GUILD MASTER POSITION.
AND IT'S NOT JUST YOOJIN—OTHER COMPANIES HAVE BEEN OFFERING ME SWEET DEALS EVER SINCE I RETIRED.
IT...MAY NOT LOOK LIKE IT, BUT...
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
...I DON'T LIKE BEING ON THE BLOODY BATTLEFIELD.

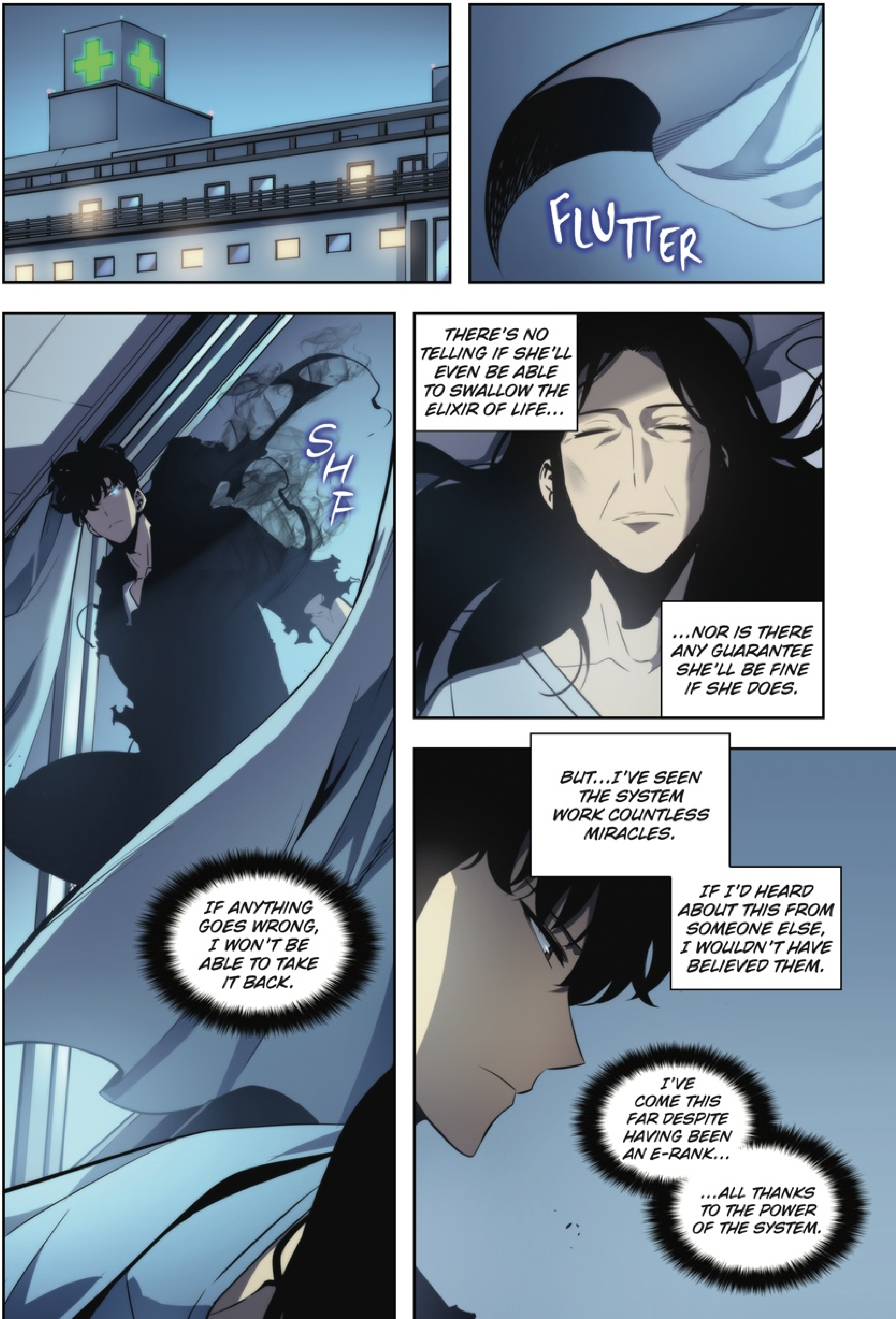
THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO TAKE THE EXAM.
DON'T YOU THINK TEACHING HISTORY SUITS ME?
WHY HISTORY?
POUR
I LIKE WATCHING HISTORICAL DRAMAS.
WEIRDO.
I'M NOT WEIRD.
I JUST WISH THAT WAR ONLY EXISTED IN THE PAST.
THAT'S RIGHT. YOU'RE NORMAL.
HUNTERS ARE THE WEIRD ONES.
IF I THINK ABOUT IT, IT'S NOT EASY TO FIND A HUNTER WHO DOESN'T LIKE FIGHTING MAGIC BEASTS.
SOME HEALERS DON'T, BUT THEY DO LOVE HEALING OTHERS, SO...
IS HAVING A PERSONALITY THAT ENJOYS FIGHTING A CONDITION OF BECOMING AN AWAKENED BEING?
NO WAY.
TAKE ANOTHER SHOT.
YES, YOUR HIGHNESS.

CHAPTER 16

Showdown of the S-ranks



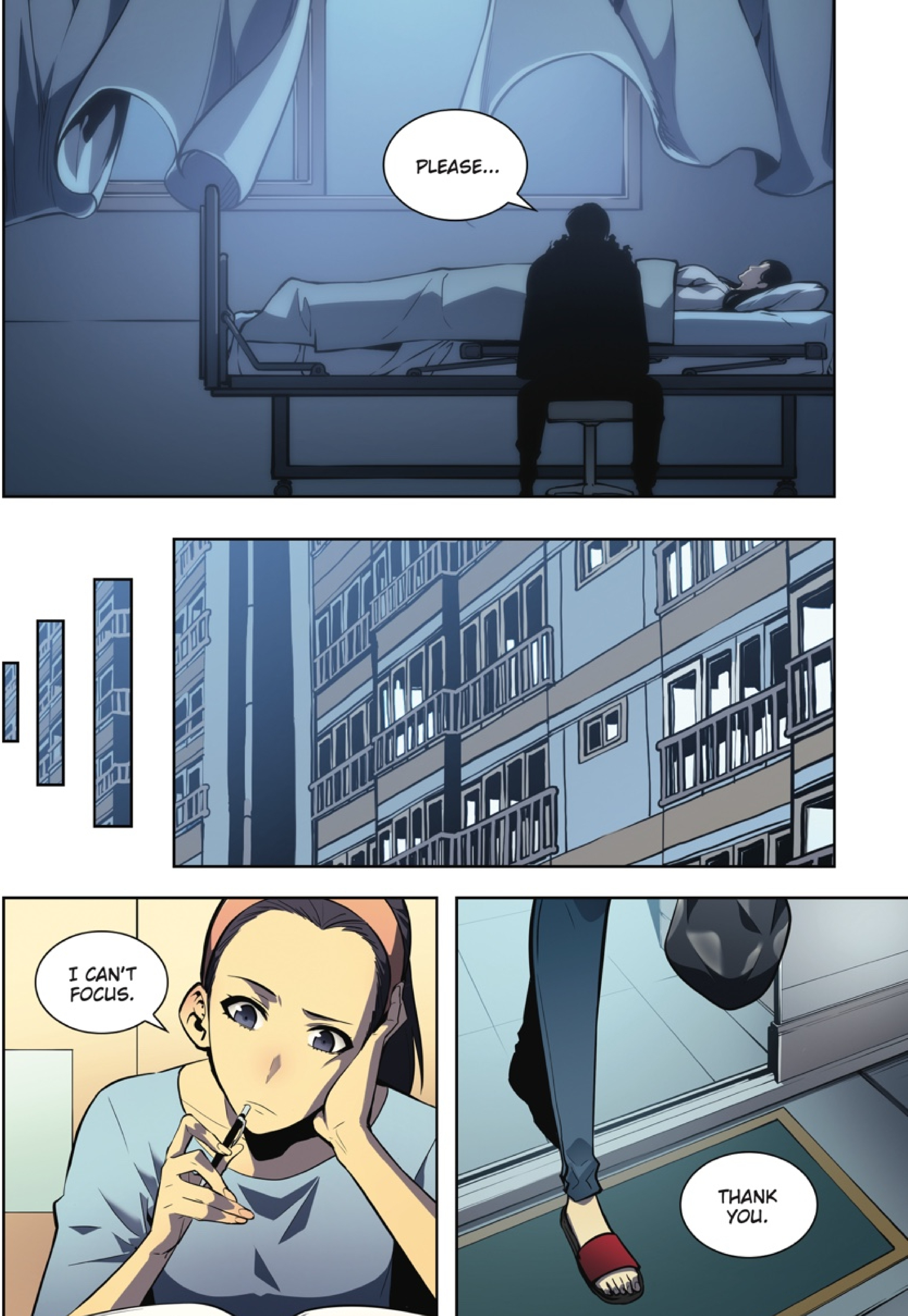
Solo Leveling


FLUTTER
SHF
IF ANYTHING GOES WRONG, I WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE IT BACK.
THERE'S NO TELLING IF SHE'LL EVEN BE ABLE TO SWALLOW THE ELIXIR OF LIFE...
...NOR IS THERE ANY GUARANTEE SHE'LL BE FINE IF SHE DOES.
BUT...I'VE SEEN THE SYSTEM WORK COUNTLESS MIRACLES.
IF I'D HEARD ABOUT THIS FROM SOMEONE ELSE, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED THEM.
I'VE COME THIS FAR DESPITE HAVING BEEN AN E-RANK...
...ALL THANKS TO THE POWER OF THE SYSTEM.

I SHOULD TRUST IT AGAIN.
POP
SHF
HOO...
PLEASE...

THIS SCAR...
I JUST WANTED TO WASH HER HAIR.
JINWOO, ARE YOU OKAY?
DID YOU GET HURT?
IT WAS MY FAULT...
I DID THIS TO HER, AND YET...

HER COMPLEXION IS BACK TO NORMAL, SO WHY DOESN'T SHE WAKE UP?
WHY...? OPEN YOUR EYES. OPEN YOUR EYES!
THIS IS THE ONLY REASON I WANTED TO LEVEL UP.
SSK
SO PLEASE, HURRY AND WAKE UP...
...AND LET ME TAKE ALL THE WEIGHT OFF YOUR SHOULDERS.


PLEASE...
I CAN'T FOCUS.
THANK YOU.

WHOOSH
SUMMER MUST BE COMING.
THE WIND IS QUITE WARM.

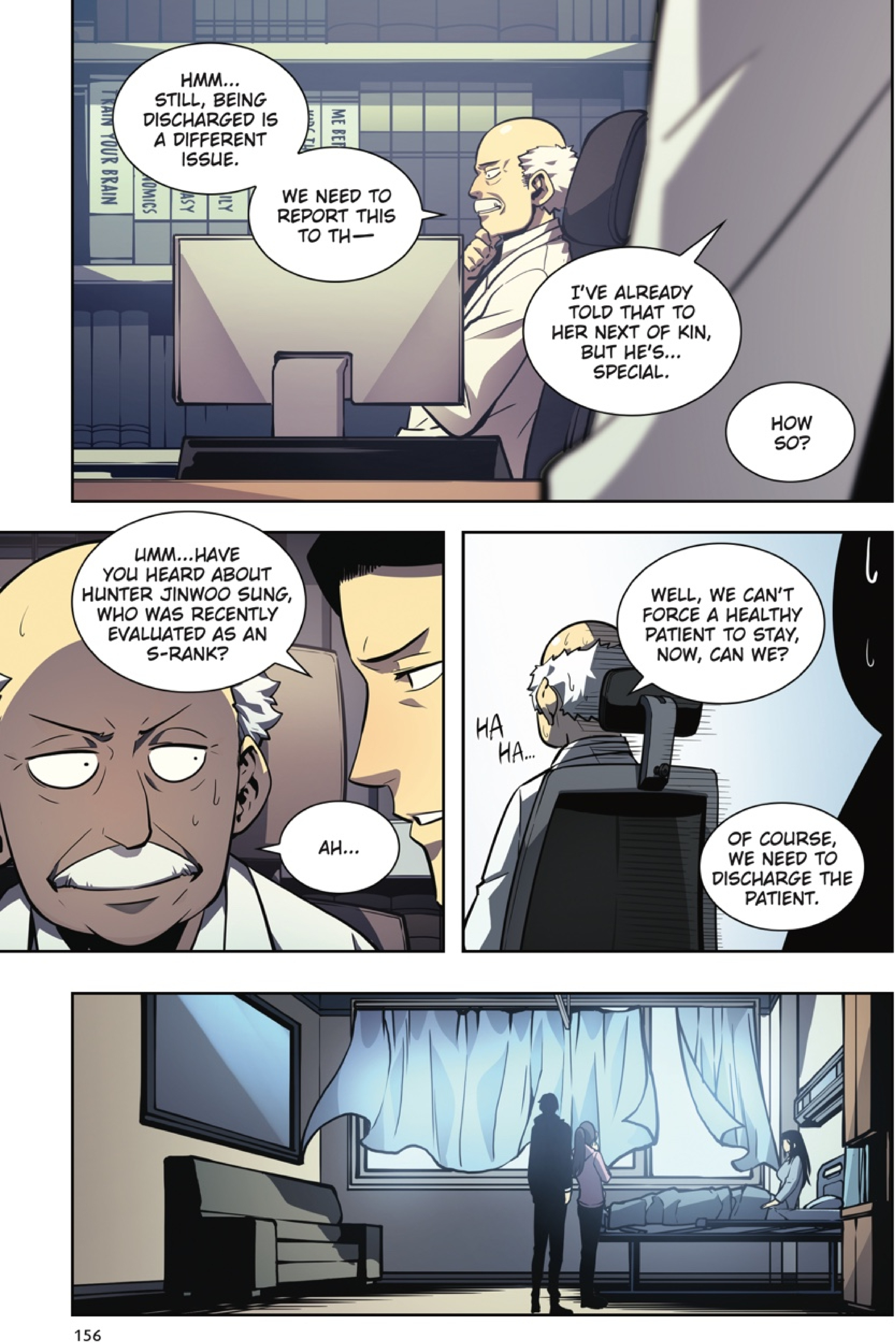
IS THAT YOU,
JINWOO?

HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE?
FOUR YEARS...
FOUR YEARS.
FOUR YEARS?
WHAT ABOUT JINAH?
IS SHE OKAY?
YEAH, SHE'S FINE.

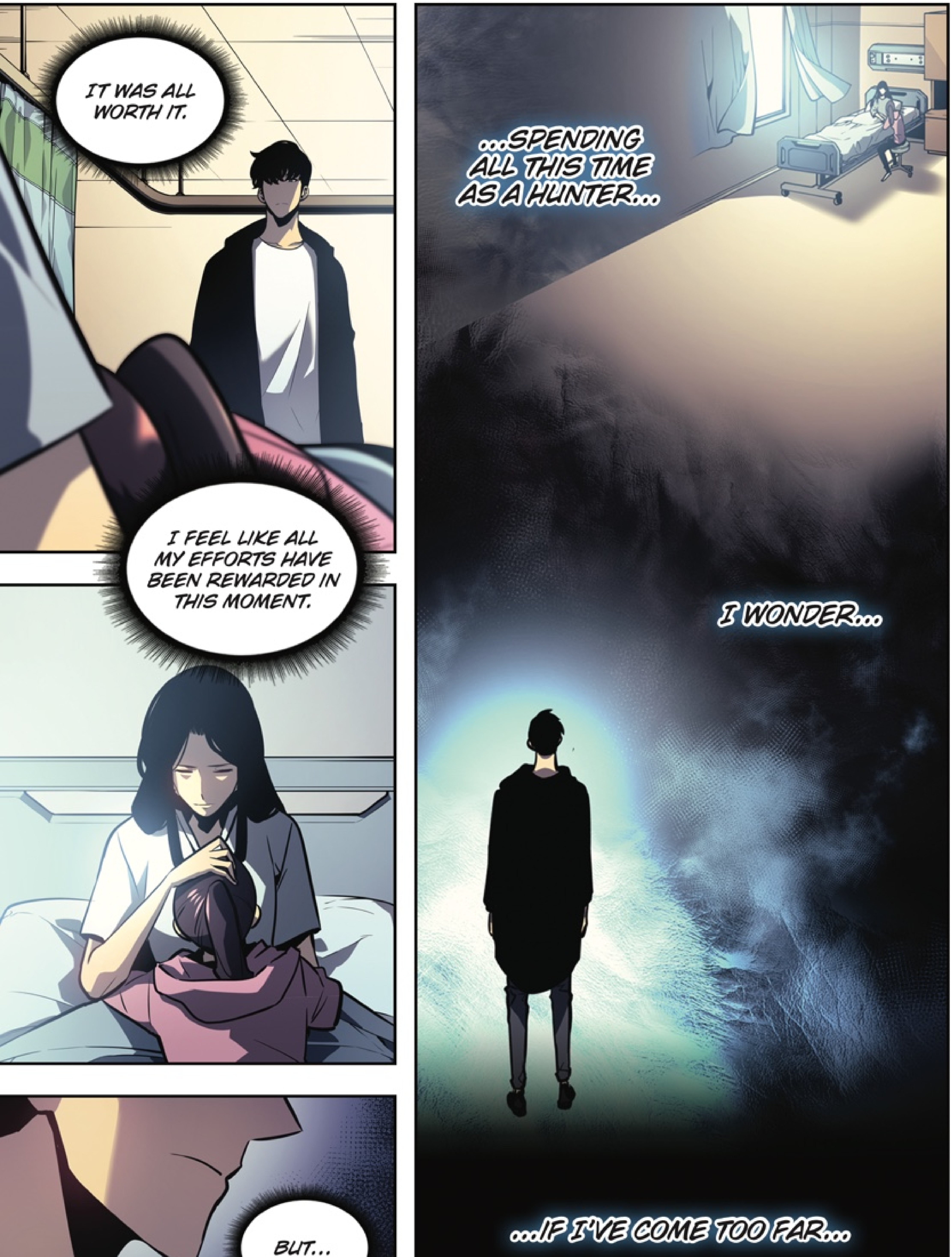
THANK YOU, SON.
YOU KEPT YOUR PROMISE.
YOU'RE HURT...
JINWOO...
...IT MUST'VE BEEN HARD FOR YOU.

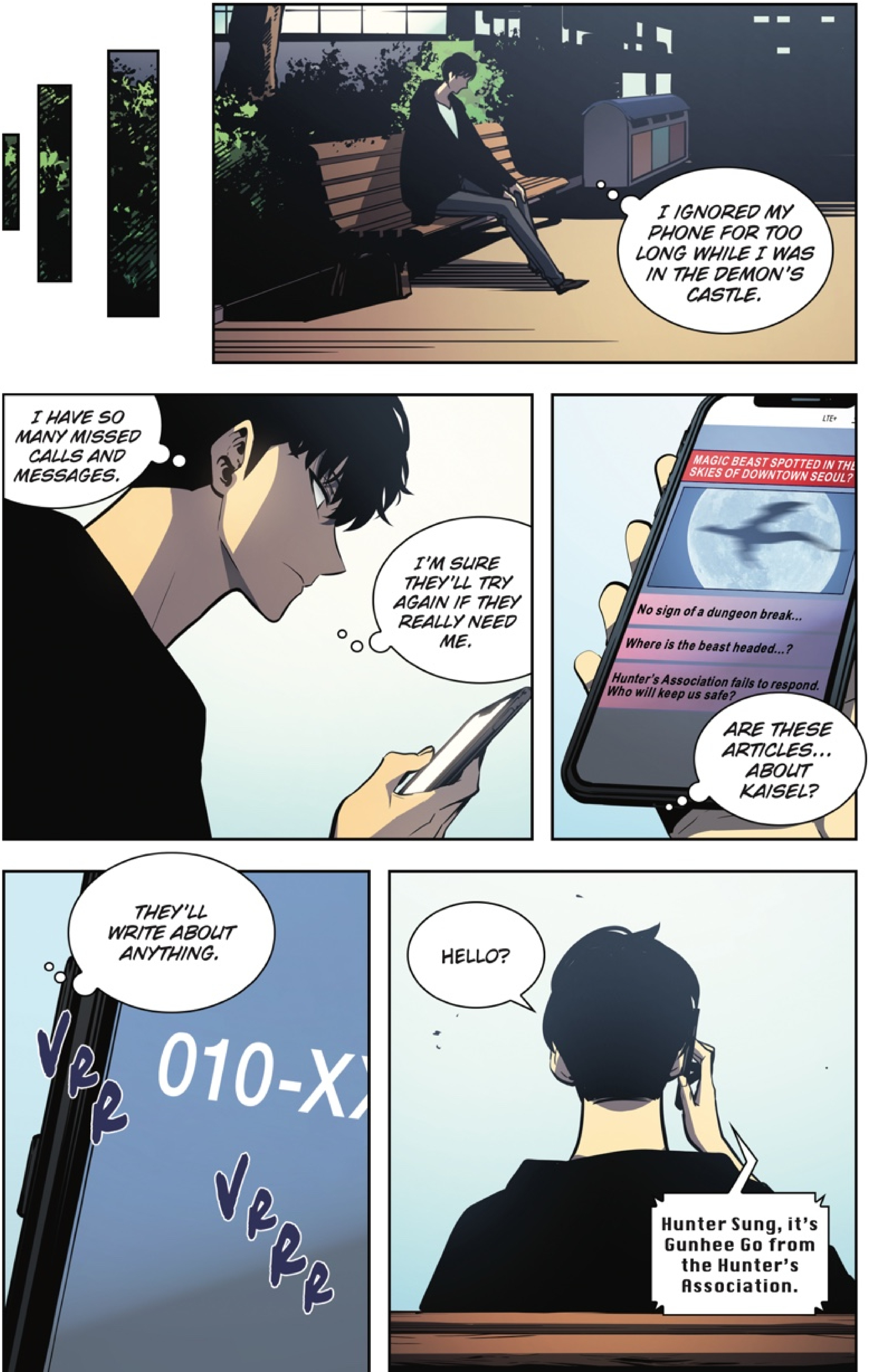
GRIT
YEAH.

WHAT?!
A PATIENT WITH THE ETERNAL SLEEP DISEASE HAS AWOKEN?!
THIS IS COMPLETELY UNPRECE-DENTED, ISN'T IT?!!
THE PATIENT'S GUARDIAN HAS ASKED THAT SHE BE DISCHARGED...WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
NO, THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE! SHE'S LIKELY UNSTABLE.
SHE PROBABLY CAN'T EVEN WALK...!
THE THING IS... EVERYTHING SEEMS NORMAL.
FOR SOMEONE WHO'S BEEN BEDRIDDEN FOR FOUR YEARS, SHE HAS NO APPARENT HEALTH PROBLEMS AND CAN WALK ON HER OWN.
SHE'S PHYSICALLY NORMAL AFTER BEING ASLEEP FOR FOUR YEARS?
PERHAPS IT'S THANKS TO THE LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEM?


TRAIN YOUR BRAIN
HMM... STILL, BEING DISCHARGED IS A DIFFERENT ISSUE.
WE NEED TO REPORT THIS TO TH—
I'VE ALREADY TOLD THAT TO HER NEXT OF KIN, BUT HE'S... SPECIAL.
HOW SO?
UMM...HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT HUNTER JINWOO SUNG, WHO WAS RECENTLY EVALUATED AS AN S-RANK?
AH...
WELL, WE CAN'T FORCE A HEALTHY PATIENT TO STAY, NOW, CAN WE?
HA HA...
OF COURSE, WE NEED TO DISCHARGE THE PATIENT.

MY BABY, YOU'VE GROWN SO MUCH.
MOM...

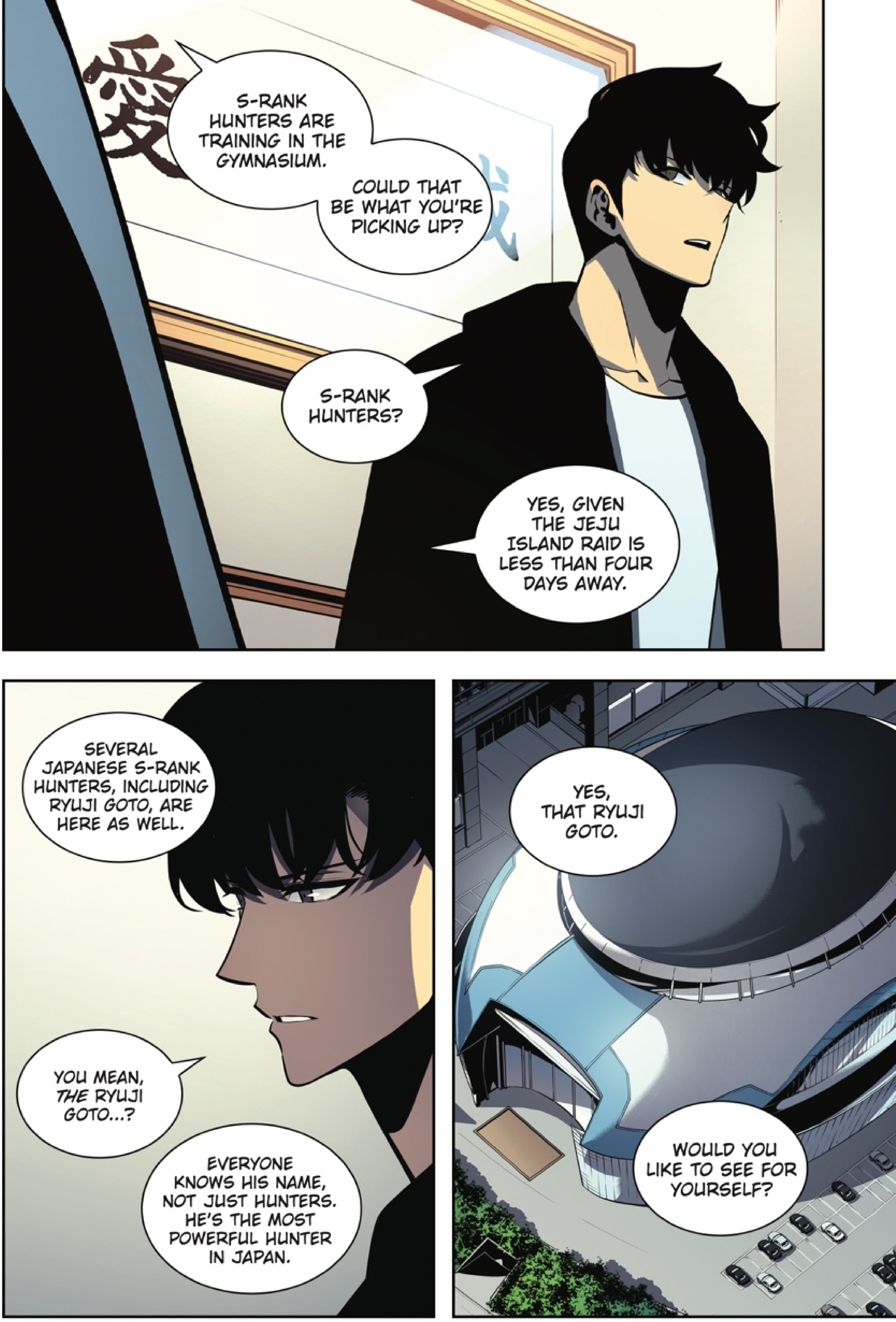

IT WAS ALL WORTH IT.
I FEEL LIKE ALL MY EFFORTS HAVE BEEN REWARDED IN THIS MOMENT.
BUT...
...SPENDING ALL THIS TIME AS A HUNTER...
I WONDER...
...IF I'VE COME TOO FAR...


I IGNORED MY PHONE FOR TOO LONG WHILE I WAS IN THE DEMON'S CASTLE.
I HAVE SO MANY MISSED CALLS AND MESSAGES.
I'M SURE THEY'LL TRY AGAIN IF THEY REALLY NEED ME.
LTE+
MAGIC BEAST SPOTTED IN THE SKIES OF DOWNTOWN SEOUL?
No sign of a dungeon break...
Where is the beast headed...?
Hunter's Association fails to respond. Who will keep us safe?
ARE THESE ARTICLES... ABOUT KAISEL?
THEY'LL WRITE ABOUT ANYTHING.
VRRR
VRRRR
010-XX
HELLO?
Hunter Sung, it's Gunhee Go from the Hunter's Association.

A CALL FROM THE ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT?
PRESIDENT GO? WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?
You've probably heard already.
SORRY... I'M NOT SURE I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
Haven't you seen the news?
OH, HE'S TALKING ABOUT KAISEL. WORD REALLY DOES TRAVEL FAST.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT. I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL FROM NOW ON.
Pardon?
THIS ISN'T ABOUT KAISEL?
SO...WHAT HAPPENED? I'VE BEEN OFF THE GRID FOR A WHILE AND JUST GOT BACK.
I guess you haven't heard. May we speak in person?
I CAN COME TO YOU.

THE OPERATION IS IN FOUR DAYS.
WE'RE GOING TO JEJU ISLAND TO GET RID OF THE ANTS ONCE AND FOR ALL.
BUT IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE NEED YOUR HELP, HUNTER SUNG.
TAKING BACK JEJU ISLAND IS EVERY KOREAN'S WISH.
WILL YOU PLEASE JOIN US?
誠

SINCE THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF MAGIC BEASTS OF THE HIGHEST LEVEL, I WOULD GLADLY JOIN THEM TO LEVEL UP, BUT...
CHILL
A WAVE OF MANA?
I—
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
IT'S NOTHING, BUT... I THINK HUNTERS ARE FIGHTING NEARBY.
HA-HA-HA! YOUR PERCEPTION IS QUITE KEEN.
YOU CAN SENSE IT EVEN FROM THIS DISTANCE?

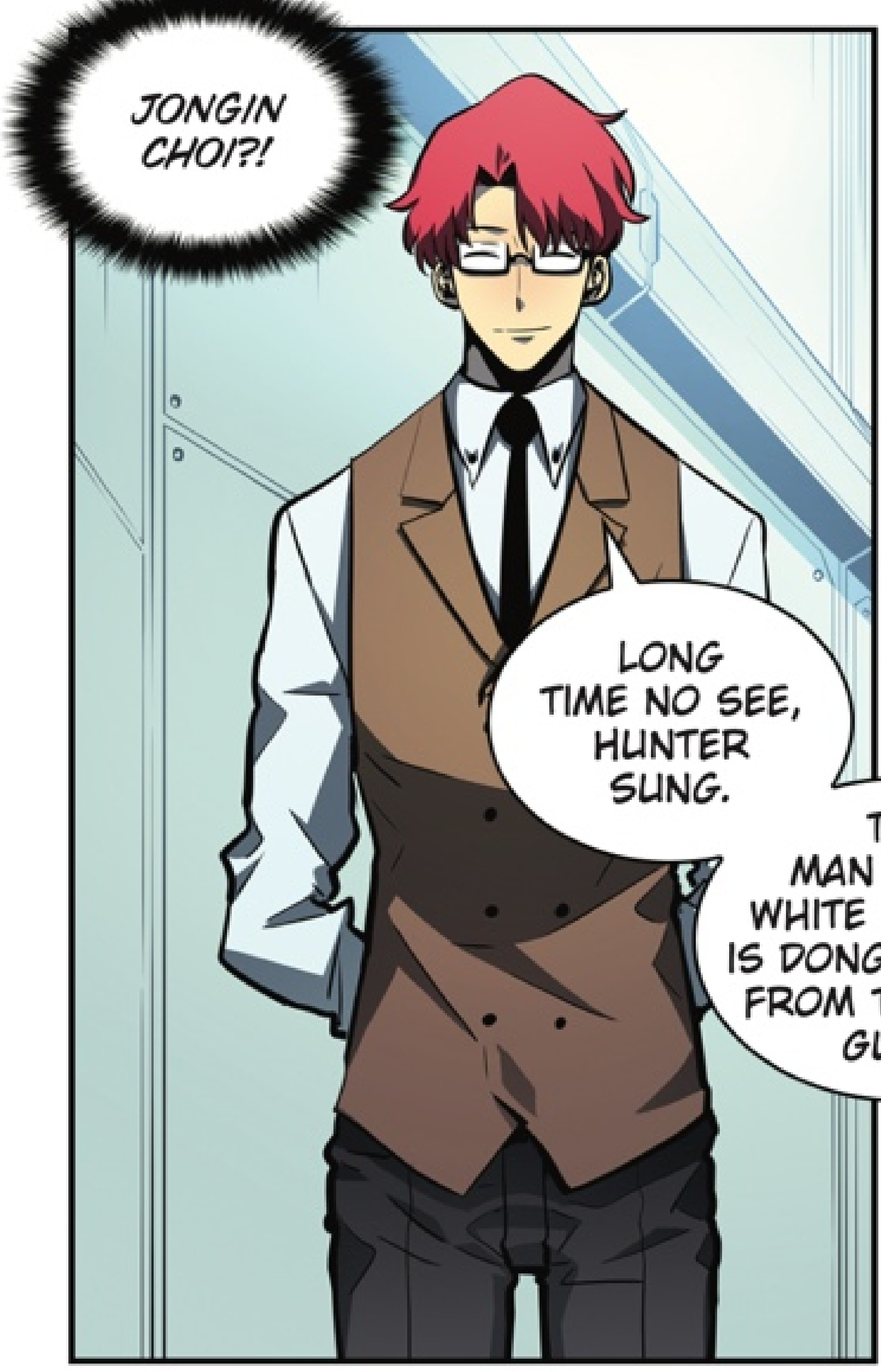

S-RANK HUNTERS ARE TRAINING IN THE GYMNASIUM.
COULD THAT BE WHAT YOU'RE PICKING UP?
S-RANK HUNTERS?
YES, GIVEN THE JEJU ISLAND RAID IS LESS THAN FOUR DAYS AWAY.
SEVERAL JAPANESE S-RANK HUNTERS, INCLUDING RYUJI GOTO, ARE HERE AS WELL.
YOU MEAN, *THE* RYUJI GOTO...?
EVERYONE KNOWS HIS NAME, NOT JUST HUNTERS. HE'S THE MOST POWERFUL HUNTER IN JAPAN.
YES, THAT RYUJI GOTO.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE FOR YOURSELF?

HYAAAH!!

SLAM
KICK

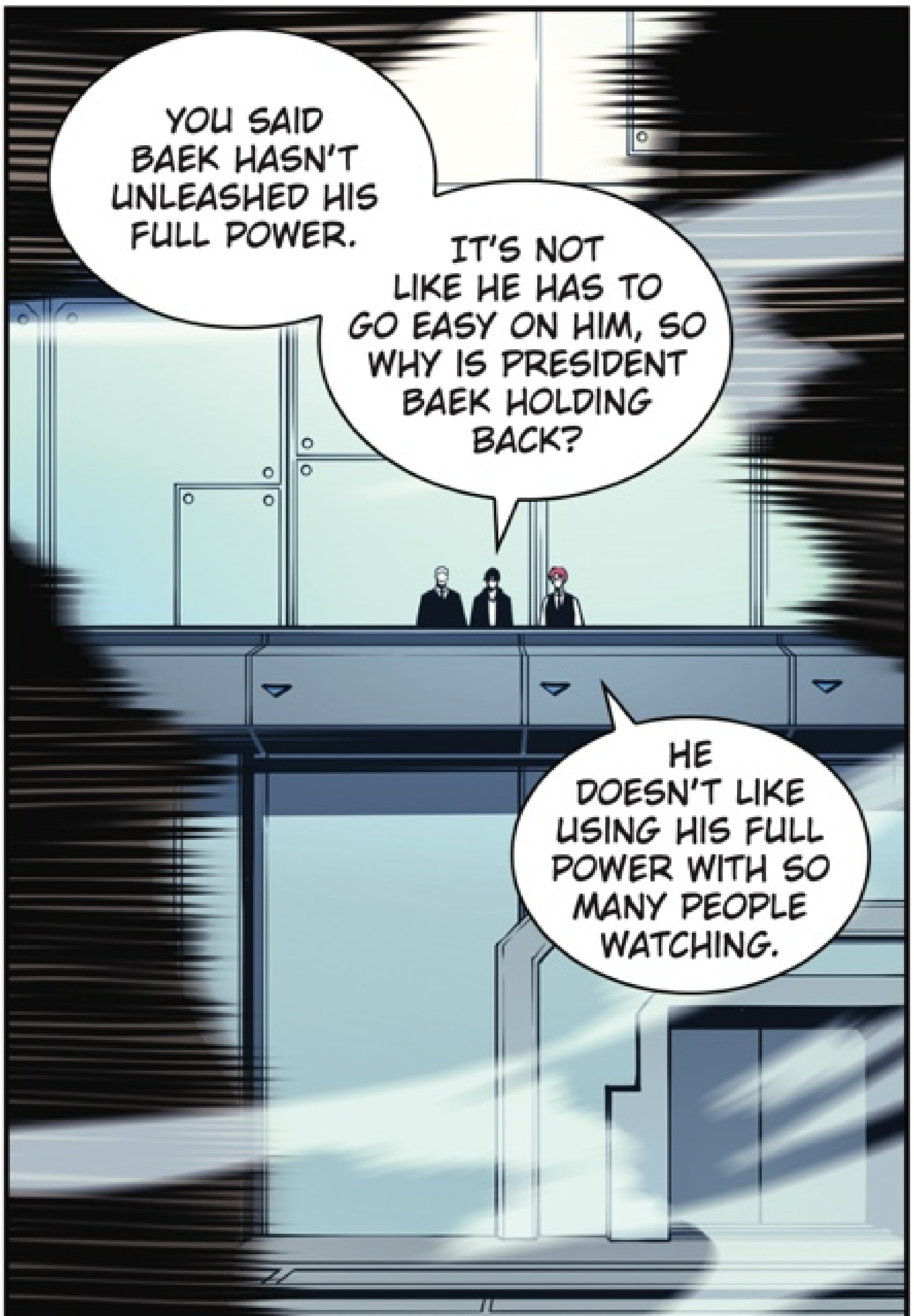
WHUD
COME ON, MASTER BAEK! HOW CAN A YOUNG MAN LIKE YOU BE SO WEAK?
I'M NO MASTER, MASTER MA.
WHOOOOM

BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM
SO MANY S-RANK HUNTERS GATHERING IN ONE PLACE DOESN'T HAPPEN VERY OFTEN.
THE WAVE OF MANA YOU SENSED EARLIER WAS PROBABLY FROM THEM.
IT LOOKS LIKE HUNTER BAEK IS LOSING.
IF YOONHO UNLEASHED HIS FULL POWER, MA WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE.



FAME

- One of the five Korean guilds
- Active in Honam area
- Hunters Guild, White Tiger Guild, and Reapers Guild have occupied the highest ranks—people have an impression that Fame Guild is number four



HE TRANSFORMS INTO A REAL MONSTER WHEN HE GOES ALL OUT.
I GUESS THE RUMOR THAT PRESIDENT BAEK CAN TRANSFORM IS TRUE.
THE PEOPLE GATHERED AROUND ARE...
IPPEI IZAWA
MARI ISHIDA

KENZO TANAKA
MINORU HOSHINO
ATSUSHI KUMAMOTO
KANAE TAWATA

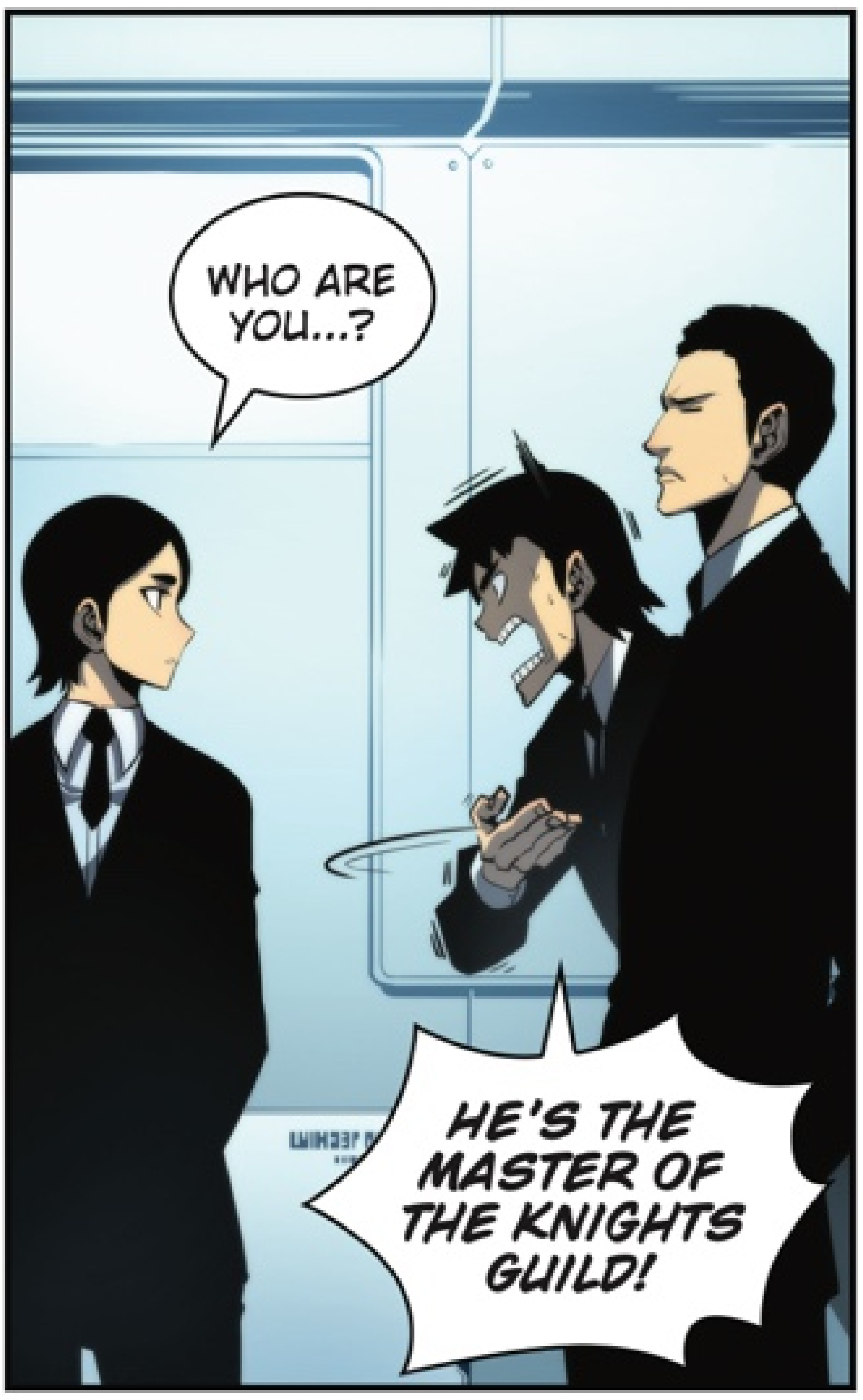
TATSUMI FUJISHIMA
KEI
AKARI SHIMIZU
...RYUJI GOTO AND THE JAPANESE S-RANK HUNTERS.

THAT'S RYUJI GOTO?
THE JAPANESE S-RANK...
<Hmm...? Who's that guy?>
<Oh, that's Hunter Jinwoo Sung, the newly registered S-rank hunter.>
<Is he an assassin-class hunter? That incredible strength can't be concealed.>
<I assume he's quite an excellent assassin.>
<What? He's a mage-class hunter.>
<He's really a mage? How's that possible...?>
<It's his official classification.>

LOOK WHO'S HERE. JINWOO SUNG, THE ONE WHO STOLE THE SPOTLIGHT FROM MINSUNG.
JINWOO SUNG?
NO WONDER THE AIR IN HERE CHANGED...IT WAS BECAUSE OF HIM.
<Kei, check the hunter who just came in. He's the tenth Korean S-rank hunter.>
<Don't talk to me, Ishida.>
<All these S-ranks here make me want to puke.>
<Looks like this Korean is sensitive to smells like me.>
<Her perception must be lower than mine if she can block it with just a handker-chief.>
<If I suddenly start talking to her, will she think I'm hitting on her?>
<I wish I spoke Korean...>

POW
POW
POW
POW
<These are the best Korea has to offer?>
<No need to see the others.>
<You think so?>
<I've observed you in raids.>
<I don't think regular S-ranks are going to cut it.>
<That's not true.>
<There's a pretty good hunter here.>
<I believe her name is Haein Cha, no?>
<Haein Cha and Gunhee Go are probably as good as our best members.>
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY, MS. TRANSLATOR?

DIDJA SAY KOREAN HUNTERS ARE TERRIBLE?
DIDJA THINK I WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND IF YA SPOKE JAPANESE?
I STUDIED JAPANESE IN HIGH SCHOOL, Y'KNOW.
YOU'RE SO GREAT, BRO!


WHO ARE YOU...?
HE'S THE MASTER OF THE KNIGHTS GUILD!

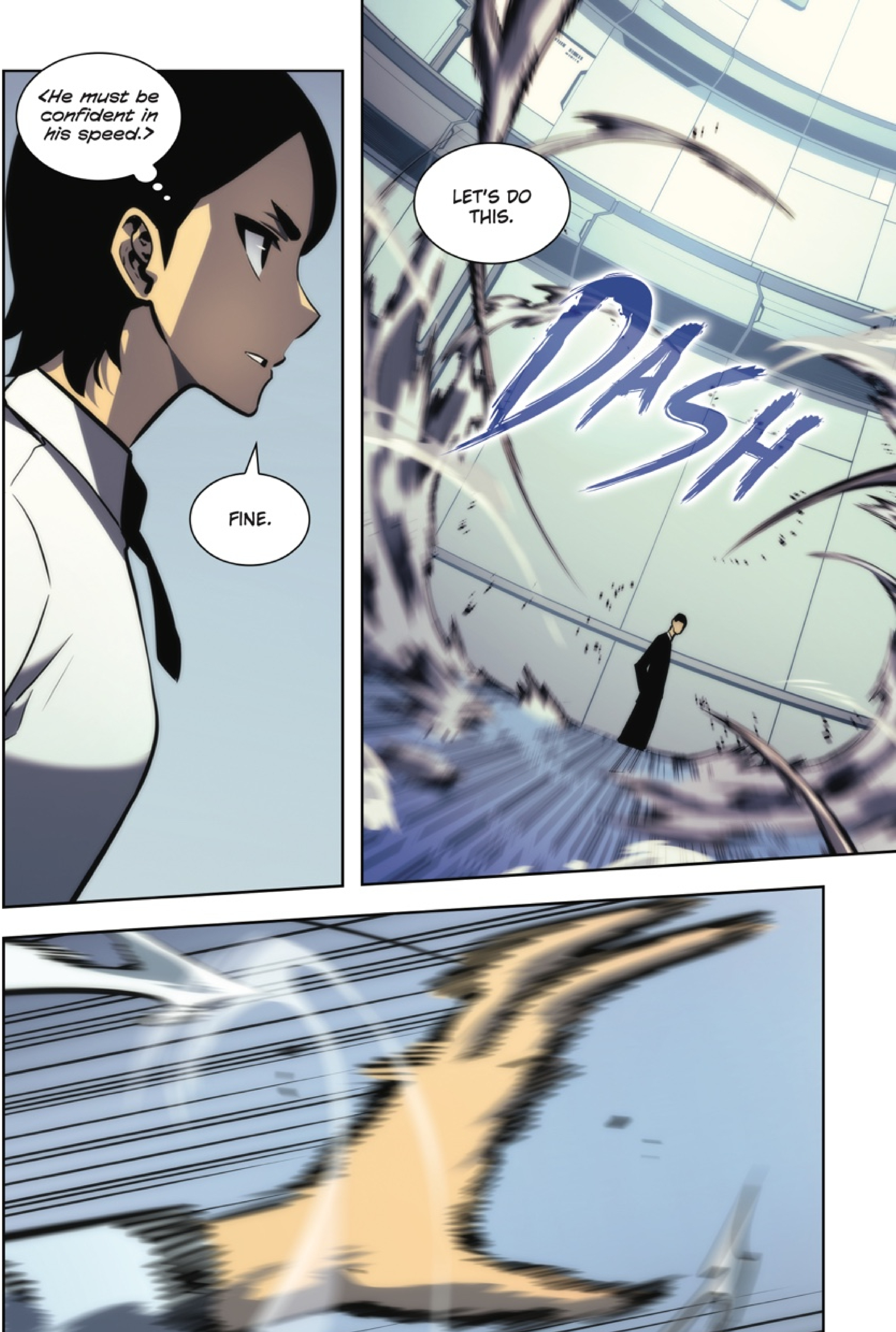
JONGSU PARK!
JONGSU PARK, A-RANK HUNTER
GUILD MASTER OF THE KNIGHTS GUILD

KNIGHTS GUILD
-Active in and around Yeongnam
-The fifth of the top five largest guilds in Korea
-Although the guild master isn't S-rank, it has recruited the most A-rank hunters in Korea

JONGSU PARK? NEVER HEARD OF YOU...
Y-YA MIGHT NOT HAVE HEARD HIS NAME SINCE HE'S AN A-RANK!
BUT EVEN SO, THE KNIGHTS GUILD IS AMONG THE TOP FIVE KOREAN GUILDS!
WE'VE RECRUITED MORE A-RANK HUNTERS THAN ANY OTHER GUILD!
STOP BRAGGING ABOUT US, YOONTAE.
A KOREAN A-RANK HUNTER... ARE YOU GOING TO JEJU ISLAND TOO?
I HEARD ONLY S-RANK HUNTERS WERE PARTICIPATING...
NGH...
<Hanekawa, what are you three talking about?>
BRO'S ON THE DEFENSE TEAM! HE'S GOT THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF CLOSIN' DOWN JEJU ISLAND!
<Well, that's a relief. A-ranks shouldn't get important assignments.>
<Please stop, Hanekawa. You're being rude.>

NEVER MIND. TRANSLATORS KNOW NOTHIN'.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE WHETHER I DO OR NOT?
I'M HANEKAWA, A JAPANESE A-RANK HUNTER.
YOU WOULDN'T CONCEDE TO A HUNTER WHO CAME ALONG AS A TRANSLATOR, WOULD YOU?
HAH. LOOK HERE, MS. TRANS-LATOR.
YER GONNA REGRET UNDERESTI-MATING ME.
WHY, ARE YOU A SUPPORT-TYPE HUNTER?
A SHOWDOWN BETWEEN A-RANK HUNTERS FROM KOREA AND JAPAN.
THIS WILL BE ENTERTAINING, WON'T IT?

FINE. BUT LET'S ESTABLISH ONE RULE.
THAT'S BETTER THAN JUST HITTIN' EACH OTHER, RIGHT?
THE RULE IS SIMPLE.
THE FIRST PERSON TA GRAB THEIR OPPONENT'S WRIST WINS.
SHF
THE PERSON WHOSE WRIST IS GRABBED LOSES.
<If I take a swing at him and he grabs my wrist, it'll be over.>
<I can't just attack like in a normal fight.>
THAT REQUIRES PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE.
SO IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE YOUR READY STANCE?
DON'TCHA WORRY. I'LL TAKE MY HANDS OUT TA GRAB YOUR WRIST.


<He must be confident in his speed.>
FINE.
LET'S DO THIS.
DASH

FWIP
FWIP
FWIP
<I'll call your bluff right now!>
SHF
WHAK
OH, BY THE WAY, I DIDN'T KICK YA.
I ONLY NUDGED YA A BIT.

YA DONE GET IT, RIGHT?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THAT DIALECT.
AND YOU DON'T LOOK SO COOL IN THOSE RIPPED PANTS.
?!
<NOW!>
WHOOOSH

TOO SLOW, MS. TRANSLATOR.
GRAB
<What just happened?>
YA ALWAYS HIDE BEHIND A TANK, DON'TCHA?
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
'S LIKE YOU'VE NEVER FOUGHT A HUMAN BEFORE.
WE SOMETIMES GET HUNTERS HERE WHO'RE OUT TA CAUSE TROUBLE.
WHETHER YA LIKE IT OR NOT, YA MIGHT HAVE TA FIGHT OTHER HUMANS.
WORST-CASE SCENARIO, YOU MIGHT HAVE TA KILL SOMEONE.

BUT A PERSON'S MOVEMENTS AREN'T AS SIMPLE AS A MAGIC BEAST'S. IF YA DON'T FORESEE THEIR NEXT MOVE, 'S OVER.
IF I'D HAD A SWORD, I WOULDA CUT YOUR NECK INSTEAD OF YOUR WRIST.
SNATCH
...TCH.
<Thank you for letting me watch.>
<That was an interesting match.>
<Hanekawa, can you please translate for everyone?>
<Ah, yes.>
I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST SOME-THING AS A MEANS OF BUILDING TRUST.
HOW ABOUT A MATCH BETWEEN THE KOREAN AND JAPANESE HUNTERS UNDER THE SAME RULE?
BUT ONLY S-RANK HUNTERS WILL TAKE PART.

......
I GUESS HE WANTS TO TEST OUR HUNTERS' ABILITIES.
OKAY.
BUT LET'S EXCLUDE MAGE AND SUPPORT-TYPE HUNTERS SINCE THEY'RE HARDER TO EVALUATE.
LET'S ADD A FEW MORE RULES.
TOUCH YOUR OPPONENT'S BACK, YOU WIN. THROW YOUR OPPONENT, YOU WIN AS WELL.
THE MATCH WILL BE A TEAM BATTLE RATHER THAN ONE-ON-ONE.
IN OTHER WORDS, NO SPECIFIC OPPONENTS. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

<So the team that takes out the other's member first will gain the advantage.>
<I guess the wrist rule is too favorable to an assassin-class hunter...>
<Fine. Let's do it.>
HUNTER YOONHO BAEK, DONGWOOK MA, HAEIN CHA, AND TAEGYU LIM WILL BE ON TEAM KOREA.
WHO WILL BE ON TEAM JAPAN?
<Kenzo Tanaka, Minoru Hoshino, Atsushi Kumamoto, and Kanae Tawata.>
<These four.>

RYUJI GOTO ISN'T GOING IN?
DOES HE JUST WANT TO SIZE UP THE KOREAN HUNTERS?
YOU DON'T SEE MATCHES BETWEEN S-RANKS EVERY DAY. GLAD I'M HERE.
<I already know what Dongwook Ma and Yoonho Baek are capable of from their match earlier.>
<But I feel like Yoonho Baek has something up his sleeve.>
<I guess I'll take the woman since it's four-on-four?>
I HOPE EVERYONE TAKES IT EASY...
WELL.

BEGIN!!
<Dongwook Ma can make his body bigger!>
<Guess he's into pure physical fights?>
VWOOOOOM

FWOOSH
<Great! All right! Keepin' it simple!>

<Let's see who's stronger!>
WHAM

WHAK
WHAK
LEAP
HE'S FAST!
DOES HE RELY ON SPEED? IF SO, I CAN'T BEAT HIM IN CLOSE-QUARTERS COMBAT.
BUT MY SPECIALTY IS CREATING SPACE BETWEEN ME AND AN OPPONENT!
ZZZZT
SLASH
AND RANGE ATTACKS ARE MY OTHER SPECIALTY!
ZOOM
<A mana arrow?!>

BOOM
<Tch, a long-range fighter?>
BOOM
<Right. This isn't a one-on-one battle.>
<I just hope Hoshino gets rid of that guy quickly!>
BOOM
THIS FACILITY HAS BEEN BUILT WITH THE BEST-QUALITY MANA STONES...
REGULAR HUNTERS DON'T EVEN CAUSE A DENT. BUT THEY'VE TRASHED THIS PLACE IN A NANOSECONDS.
I HATE NOT BEING ABLE TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVING TO DRIVE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BATTLE...
OUR OPPONENTS ARE THE STRONGEST HUNTERS EVEN AMONG S-RANKS!
I NEED TO APPROACH THIS FIGHT LIKE I'M TRYING TO BREAK THEIR WRISTS, NOT JUST GRAB THEM!

<He's wasting time.>
<I'm not following the lame rule of targeting someone's wrist or back.>

<I'm following the rule of survival of the fittest!>

I DEFINITELY FELT HIS HOSTILE ENERGY.
WHY DID HE HESITATE?
COULD IT BE...? HE GOT SCARED?
<Damn it. I hesitated again.>
<Maybe being a hunter isn't my thing?>
WAS HIS NAME KUMAMOTO?
I'M NOT SURE WHETHER HE HAS SHARP JUDGMENT, OR IF HE'S JUST A COWARD.
AND HE DOESN'T SEEM THE TYPE WHO EVEN LIKES TO FIGHT.
I GUESS WHAT I SURMISED ON THAT DAY WAS WRONG?
IS HAVING A PERSONALITY THAT ENJOYS FIGHTING A CONDITION OF BECOMING AN AWAKENED BEING?
SOME HEALERS DON'T, BUT THEY DO LOVE HEALING OTHERS, SO...
NO WAY.
IS GOTO TESTING THAT MAN USING US?
FWISH
TO SEE WHETHER HE'S READY TO FIGHT THE ANTS?

A TEST AGAINST ME...?!
KRAK
KRAAAK
JUST A LITTLE... I'LL GIVE IT MY ALL!
<H-his eyes changed ...!>
<He's freaking me out! I need to run!>
LEAP
SWOOSH
YOU'RE QUITE THE COWARD, AREN'T YOU?
TOO BAD YOUR AWAKENED POWER HAS MADE YOU ONE OF THE TOP S-RANK HUNTERS.

BOY, THIS PLACE IS FULLA MONSTERS.
THE MATCH I HAD EARLIER WAS JUST CHILD'S PLAY.
NO, BRO! YOU WERE BEYOND AWESOME!
WHUD
!!
<Looks like I won in terms of physical strength.>
HEH-HEH. I'M EATING THE FLOOR.
THIS IS A FIRST FOR ME.
SMASH

!
<I can declare victory now, right?>

HWOO...
SO I'M YOUR NEXT TARGET?

BETTING ON ME GOING DOWN EASIER THAN HAEIN?
YOU MUST THINK I'M WEAK.

POW
<Argh!>
FWISH
<I knew she was fast, but that's not all it is.>
<I can't read her patterns.>
HAEIN CHA'S NICKNAME IS THE DANCER.
SHE WAS CALLED THAT BECAUSE OF HER QUICK CHOREOGRAPHY AS SHE CUT DOWN MAGIC BEASTS.

BUT THE NICKNAME EMBARRASSED HER, AND SHE FORBADE ITS USE, SO IT'S NOT WIDELY KNOWN.
SLASH

TAP
TAP.
I HAVE TO HURRY AND HELP YOONHO!
<They'll take care of him!>
<I need to take care of h—>

BAM
BAM
<What is that?!>
<It's like a Gatling gun.>
<How many punches did she just throw?>
<Ten? No, maybe... fourteen?>
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
<That many in a split second— no one can block that.>
OH NO. I PUNCHED WITHOUT THINKING.

<Kumamoto is pissed.>
<His personality totally changes when he's mad.>
<It's not just a change in personality. He loses his mind!>
<He never remembers a fight.>
<He's not suited for a strike squad.>
<He could break rules or even attack a member.>
<Still, he can clear a B-rank gate all by himself, so...>
<But what's the point of being an S-rank if you can't join raids for A-rank gates?>
<If it seems like he's going to hurt the Koreans, stop him immediately.>
<This is just a test.>
<Isn't it better to stop him now?>

<We can't afford to pay for the damages he may cause.>
THOOM
HE'S FAST...!

THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A FRIENDLY MATCH, BUT HIS HOSTILE ENERGY IS TOO INTENSE, SO...
HOPE YOU DON'T THINK I'M MEDDLING...

<You bastard!!>
WHAM
<That move just now...>
<Hanekawa, is he really a mage-class hunter?>
<Yes... It's been confirmed...>
<I should see for myself.>

HUNTER CHA, HOW ABOUT WE DECLARE THAT TEAM KOREA HAS LOST THIS MATCH?
OKAY...
LOOKS LIKE HUNTER BAEK GOT CAUGHT TOO.
NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT, THERE'S A HUGE POWER GAP HERE.
EVEN IF I'D TRANSFORMED, I COULDN'T HAVE DONE ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY.
SIR, MR. GOTO HAS A REQUEST.

<You're Hunter Jinwoo Sung, right?>
<Will you spar with me?>
THAT AURA...
I DON'T NEED A TRANSLATION.
HE WANTS TO TEST ME.

NOT SURE WHAT HIS END GOAL IS, BUT...
...THIS IS MY CHANCE TO TEST THE SKILLS I DEVELOPED IN THE DEMON'S CASTLE.
<He's smiling in my face?>
<Uhh... Mr. Goto? Hunter Sung accepts your challenge.>
<On one condition.>
<Hm?>
<He accepts only if you don't hold anything back, sir.>
<Is he serious?>

HUH? WHAT'S GOING ON THERE?
<This will be fun. There won't be any "accidents" since we have an S-rank healer here.>
<Fine. Shimizu, please heal anyone who was injured.>
<And later, him.>
SO HE'S THE TENTH S-RANK HUNTER I'VE HEARD ABOUT? HE'S FULL OF ENERGY.
ALL READY TO SPAR WITH RYUJI GOTO.
IS JINWOO GOING TO BE OKAY?

WELL, HE FOUGHT AGAINST AN A-RANK DUNGEON BOSS AND OVER A HUNDRED HIGH ORCS, SO...
ARE YOU OKAY BEING SO CLOSE TO OTHER HUNTERS TODAY?
IT'S NOT AS IF I'LL BE ABLE TO BLOCK MY NOSE ON JEJU ISLAND, SO...
YOU'VE MET HUNTER SUNG BEFORE, RIGHT?
YES.
SHOULDN'T YOU STOP HIM?
THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE, CONSIDERING HIS OPPONENT.
SO WHY...?
I WON'T FOR THE SAME REASON YOU WON'T, HUNTER CHA.
FLINCH

AREN'T YOU FEELING STRANGELY EXCITED?
IF I'M RIGHT, HUNTER SUNG IS AN AWAKENED BEING WHOSE ABILITIES CAN GROW...
HE MAY BE EVEN STRONGER NOW.
SO, SHALL WE...
...START?
KA
BLAM

AS SOON AS I FINISHED MY SENTENCE.
<I missed?>
TMP
<He's a mage hunter when he moves like that? Don't make me laugh.>
<He was lightning quick, and his foot-steps made no sound.>
<He may be able to deceive others, but he can't fool me.>
<I'll expose you...>
<...until you are laid completely bare!>

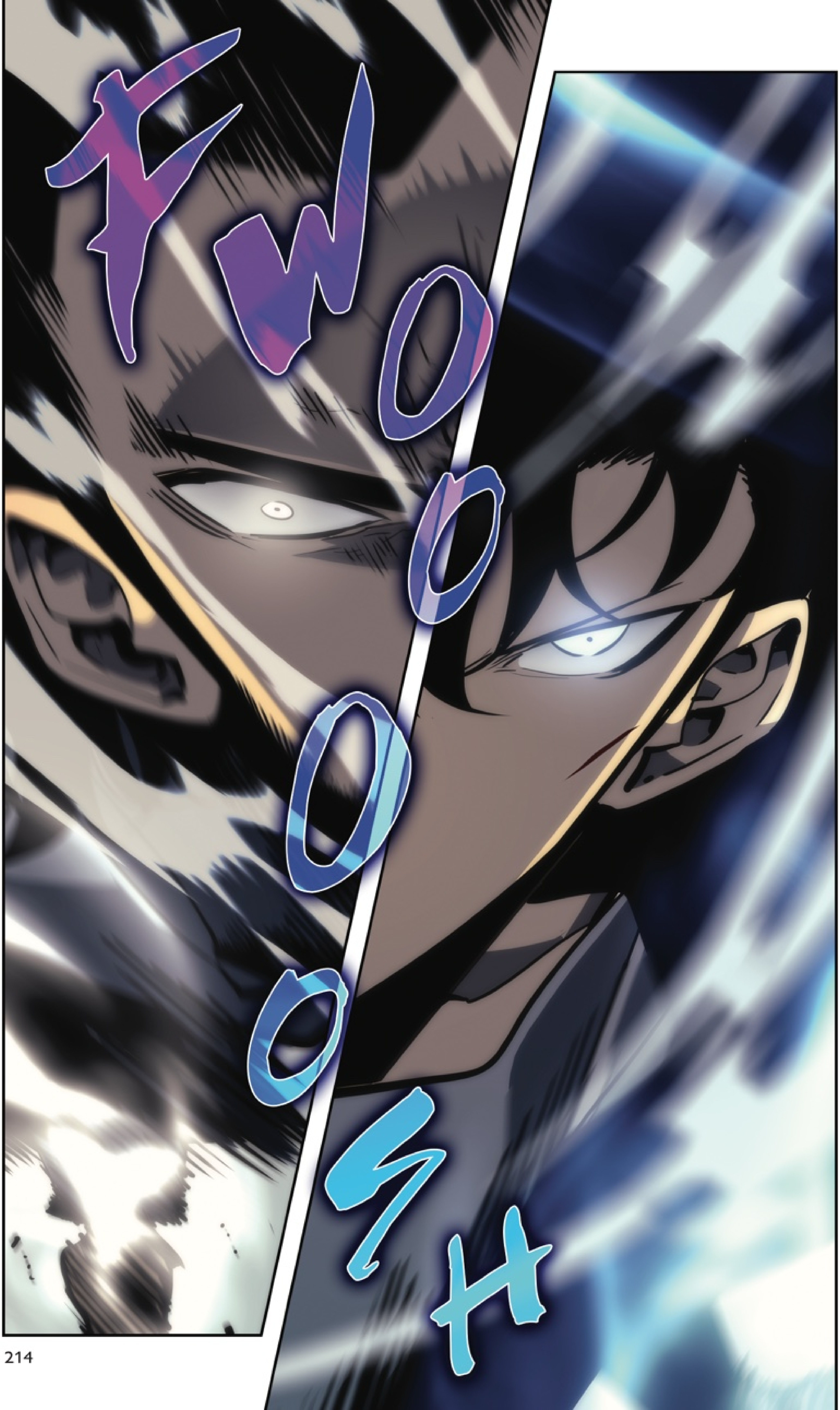
RYUJI'S STRENGTH IS ON A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT LEVEL FROM OTHER S-RANK HUNTERS FOR SURE.
BUT...
WHOOSH
...IT'S NOTHING I CAN'T HANDLE.
SHF
<He's still smiling?>
<Shouldn't we stop them?>
<Mr. Goto is actually taking this seriously, huh?>
WHAT AN OFFENSIVE! I CAN HARDLY FOLLOW THEIR MOVES!
HUNTER SUNG IS HANGING IN THERE, THOUGH!
IT'S QUITE IMPRESSIVE HE'S DODGING THAT WELL.

HUNTER SUNG ISN'T JUST "HANGING IN THERE."
HE'S EGGING ON RYUJI TO MAKE HIM KEEP ATTACKING!
SOMETHING INTERESTING HAS TRANSPIRED WHILE I WAS OUT FOR A SMOKE.
<He dodged me?>
<Is it just dumb luck?!>

<If I don't give it my all, I won't even be able to touch you.>
<I've changed my mind.>

<I'm going to kill him!>
WHOOSH
SLIT
HOSTILE ENERGY?

KA
BOOM
IF I PLAY AROUND TOO LONG, AN URGENT REQUEST WILL POP UP LIKE WITH DONGSUK HWANG OR TAESIK KANG.
IF I'D BEEN ANY SLOWER, I COULD'VE LOST AN EYE.
<Crazy strong...>
<And he could've grabbed my wrist, but he took my hand instead!>
<Are you toying with me?>
NOT SURE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING, BUT...THE GAME IS OVER IF I GRAB YOUR WRIST.
YOU DON'T WANT TO END THINGS YET EITHER, RIGHT?


FWOOOOSH

GRAB
KRIIIK

GRAB

KRAAAK

THAT'S ENOUGH.
HE HAS TO LEAD THE JAPANESE TEAM IN A FEW DAYS.

WHO'LL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG?

LET'S STOP THIS. IT'S GOTTEN TOO HEATED.
YES...!
DID I DO SOMETHING I SHOULDN'T HAVE?
NO, IT'S FINE.
OH-HO! JUST A SINGLE SCRATCH AFTER SPARRING WITH THE GREAT RYUJI GOTO? NOT BAD AT ALL!
OOH! YOU'RE A STURDY YOUNG MAN! LOOK AT THESE MUSCLES!
MY GUILD IS MOSTLY MAGE HUNTERS, SO WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH BRAWLERS.
IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER GUILD IN MIND, YOU SHOULD JOIN US, MASTER SUNG!

ABOUT THAT, MASTER MA.
HUNTER JINWOO SUNG IS A MAGE CLASS.
WHAT?!
I'D LOST MY COOL TOO.
PHEW...
BUT I LEARNED ABOUT THE HUNTERS HERE.
AND...

...GUNHEE GO, JONGIN CHOI, HAEIN CHA, YOONHO BAEK, AND RYUJI GOTO WERE ALL CLOSE TO ME.
YET NOT EVEN S-RANK HUNTERS COULD DETECT THE SOLDIERS HIDING IN THE SHADOWS.
EVEN RYUJI GOTO DIDN'T PICK UP ON ANY ABNORMAL ENERGY...
PRESIDENT GO.
YES, HUNTER SUNG?

YOU ASKED ME TO JOIN THE JEJU ISLAND RAID?

<Mr. Goto?>

HAFF!
HUFF!

AN AWAKENED BEING WHO CAN INCREASE HIS ABILITIES...
IS THAT ACTUALLY POSSIBLE?
HAAAH...
WHAT WOULD JINWOO'S NET WORTH BE?

TRYING TO RECRUIT JINWOO IS A LOST CAUSE.
BUT THAT'S NOT THE ONLY WAY TO MAINTAIN A WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH JINWOO.
VRR
TIME TO EXECUTE PLAN B.
LOOKS LIKE THE FINAL LIST OF THE HUNTERS GOING AFTER THE ANTS.
THERE'S NO HUNTER JINWOO SUNG?!

<Mr. Sukimoto.>
<...There's an incredible hunter here in Korea.>
<Ha-ha. They can't be better than you, surely?>
REIJI SUKIMOTO, S-RANK HUNTER (VICE MASTER OF THE GUILD OF THE DRAWN SWORD)
<Well... I'm not so sure.>
<What's the hunter's name?>
<Jinwoo Sung.>
<He's the recently reawakened S-rank.>
<That's strange. There's nobody here by that name.>
<Pardon? Nobody where?>

<Ah, allow me to explain.>
<I just received the finalized roster of Korean hunters.>
<Jongin Choi, Dongwook Ma, Yoonho Baek, Haein Cha, Taegyu Lim, and Byunggu Min.>
<Those are the six members of the Korean team departing in four days.>
<No way.>
<Unless Gunhee Go has lost his mind, there's no way he'd omit such a talented hunter from the team.>
<Well, who cares? There will be sixteen S-rank hunters participating in the raid.>
<Everything will be fine.>
<Yes... I'm not worried.>
<You'll hear from me once the raid starts.>
<Yes.>

BAENGNOKDAM ON MOUNT HALLA
THE QUEEN ANT HAD A THOUGHT.
WE MUST LEAVE THIS ISLAND BEHIND.
THERE IS NO PREY.
MY CHILDREN HAVE RESORTED TO EATING ONE ANOTHER.
CRUNCH
MUNCH
CHOMP
THERE IS NOT ENOUGH FOOD TO SUSTAIN ALL THE SUBJECTS OF MY QUEENDOM.
CRUNCH

WE CANNOT GO ON LIKE THIS.
I NEED A MORE FORMIDABLE SOLDIER...
MY SUBJECTS REQUIRE A MIGHTY SOLDIER TO LEAD THEM.
FOR MY QUEENDOM...
...ANY ENEMY WHO STANDS IN OUR WAY WILL TREMBLE IN FEAR.

FOR MY QUEENDOM...
...ANY ENEMY WHO STANDS IN OUR WAY WILL TREMBLE IN FEAR.
ANY ENEMY WHO STANDS IN OUR WAY WILL TREMBLE IN FEAR.
I WANT TO GET STRONGER.
I WANT TO GET STRONGER.

SKREEEEK!

EAT, EAT, EAT...
GROW STRONGER...
...MY CHILD.

CHAPTER 17

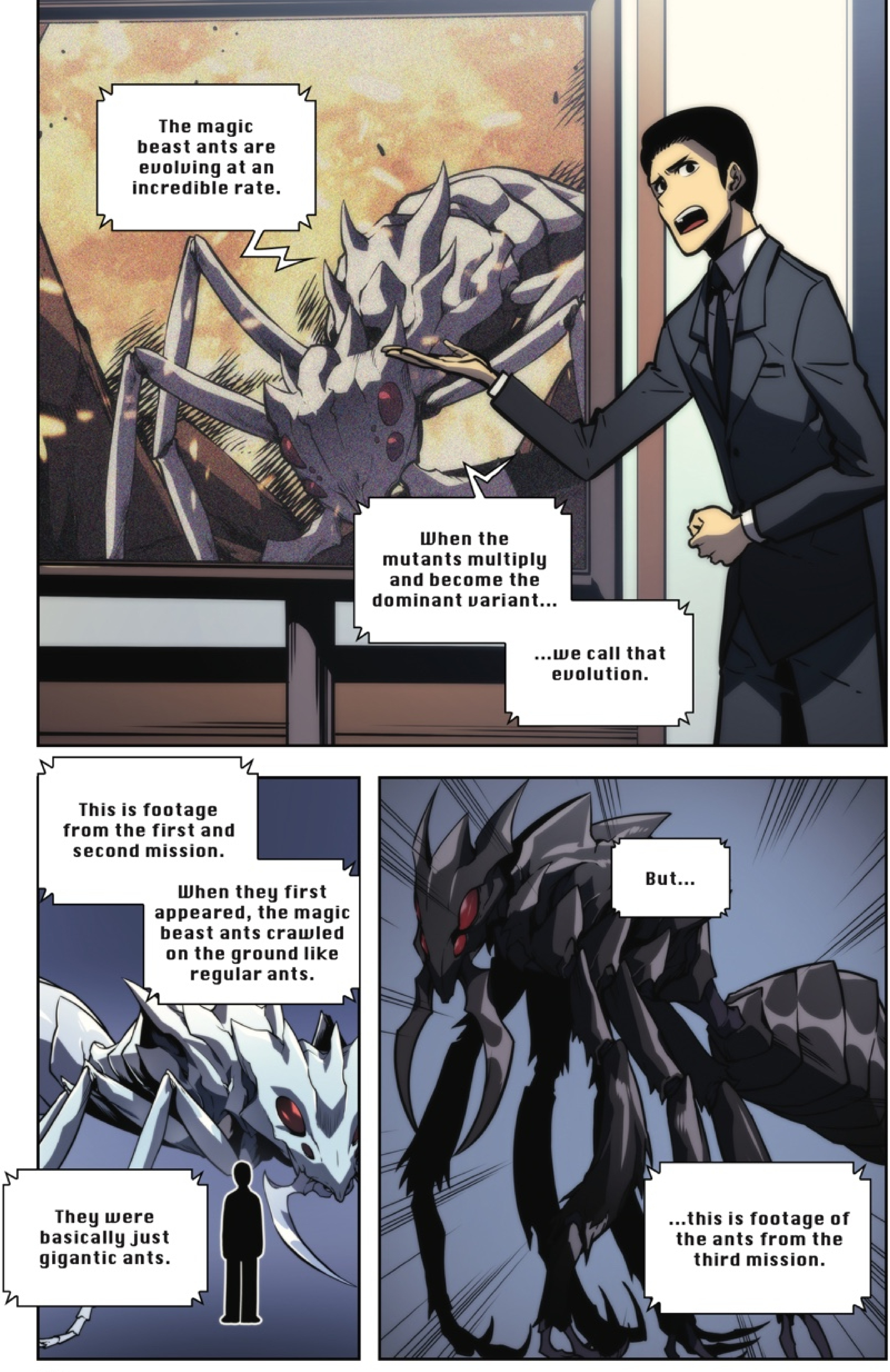
The Jeju Island Raid

Solo Leveling

JINAH MADE A HUGE MESS WHILE I WAS INSIDE THE DEMON'S CASTLE.
OUCH.
MOOSH
MOOSH
Shadow
IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I DID ANY CHORES.
SHALL WE CLEAN THE HOUSE TOGETHER?
NOD

VWEEN
THIS PLACE IS REALLY RUN-DOWN.
THERE ARE STAINS IN PLACES THAT'RE HARD TO SEE.
WELL, WE'VE LIVED HERE SINCE I WAS LITTLE.
JINWOO, BY ANY CHANCE...
...WHILE I WAS ASLEEP...
...HAS THERE BEEN ANY NEWS ABOUT YOUR DAD?
......
NO.
IF I TOLD HER I'M WORKING AS A HUNTER LIKE DAD...
...WHAT WOULD SHE SAY?

THERE'S A REASON WHY MOM DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE THIS OLD APARTMENT.
A REASON WE'RE STILL RENTING...
...EVEN THOUGH I'VE MADE MORE MONEY THAN MOST PEOPLE CAN EVEN DREAM OF.
MY MOTHER IS WAITING FOR MY MISSING FATHER.
JUST IN CASE HE COMES BACK TO THIS PLACE...
MOM NEEDS THIS PLACE... NO...
SHE NEEDS ME.
THE JEJU ISLAND RAID...


The magic beast ants are evolving at an incredible rate.
When the mutants multiply and become the dominant variant...
...we call that evolution.
This is footage from the first and second mission.
When they first appeared, the magic beast ants crawled on the ground like regular ants.
They were basically just gigantic ants.
But...
...this is footage of the ants from the third mission.

The ants walked upright on two legs like humans. Their huge heads were smaller, they were more agile...
...and they could use their other four legs like hands.
The species had transformed within two years.
And this is the magic beast that caused the massive damage in Japan.
The ant somehow looked even more human and...
...had large wings on its back.
THAT THING CAN FLY?
THAT'S CORRECT.
THIS WAS ALSO THE CATALYST FOR THE KOREA-JAPAN ALLIANCE.
EVEN THE BRAVEST HUNTERS WOULDN'T WANT TO SQUARE OFF AGAINST THOSE TERRIFYING MAGIC BEASTS.
MEANWHILE, ONE HUNTER IS COMING OUT OF RETIREMENT TO FACE THE ANTS.

> Why isn't Jinwoo Sung's name on the Korean list?
> The rank don't change ppl. Once an E-rank, always an E-rank! I bet he peed himself and ran off scared LOL
> Even the retired Hunter Byunggu Min is joining the raid...but no Jinwoo Sung?
> He's really gonna be like that after becoming an S-rank?! So humiliating T_T
VRRR
I PERSONALLY DON'T CARE WHAT OTHERS SAY, BUT...
...I'M WORRIED ABOUT JINAH.
HUH? ISN'T THAT JINWOO SUNG?
Boss! It's me! Jinho!
HEY, ARE YOU STILL AT THAT MOTEL?
Oh, no, I got my own place recently. Thankfully, my mother contacted me, so...
Anyway, boss, I've found an office space. Can you come check it out?
OFFICE?

WE NEED AN OFFICE TO FORM A GUILD!
SO? WHAT DO YOU THINK, BOSS?
I PICKED THE BEST SPACE I COULD FIND NEAR YOUR APARTMENT!
ISN'T IT TOO BIG FOR THE TWO OF US?
TO FORM A GUILD, YOU NEED A MINIMUM OF THREE HUNTERS, BOSS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? A PRESIDENT, A VICE PRESIDENT, AND AT LEAST ONE EMPLOYEE.
THEN WE HAVE TO RECRUIT ANOTHER HUNTER.
OF THE HUNTERS I KNOW, WHO WOULD COME JUST TO FILL THE QUOTA...?
OH RIGHT! SOMEONE WAS ASKING FOR YOU.
ME? WHO WAS IT?
SOME FOREIGNER WHO SPOKE ENGLISH...
HE SAID HE'D BE IN KOREA UNTIL THE SEVENTEENTH. HE REALLY WANTED YOU TO CALL HIM, BOSS.
A FOREIGNER WHO SPOKE ENGLISH...WHO COULD IT BE?

UH, HANG ON.
WHAT'S WRONG, BOSS?
FSHH
I NEED TO HEAD BACK.
!
SHOOP
AAAAH!!

SHIVER
SHIVER
IF YOU SCREAM, YOU'RE DEAD.
SEVERAL WOMEN HAVE DIED HERE...BUT YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT, DIDN'T YOU?
AH... H-HELP...
THAT'S WHY I LIKE THIS NEIGHBORHOOD SO MUCH.

RIGHT?
I LIKE THIS NEIGHBORHOOD A LOT TOO.

I'M CURIOUS.
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

WHAT? YOU ABOUT TO LECTURE ME?
YOU WANNA KNOW WHY?
WELL, IF I HAD TO SAY...

...IT'S BECAUSE IT'S FUN!
DASH
IT'S STRANGE, BUT WHEN I SEE SOMEONE WEAKER THAN ME, I HAVE THIS INTENSE DESIRE TO MESS WITH—
STAB
STAB
STAB
STAB
I THINK I GET THAT.

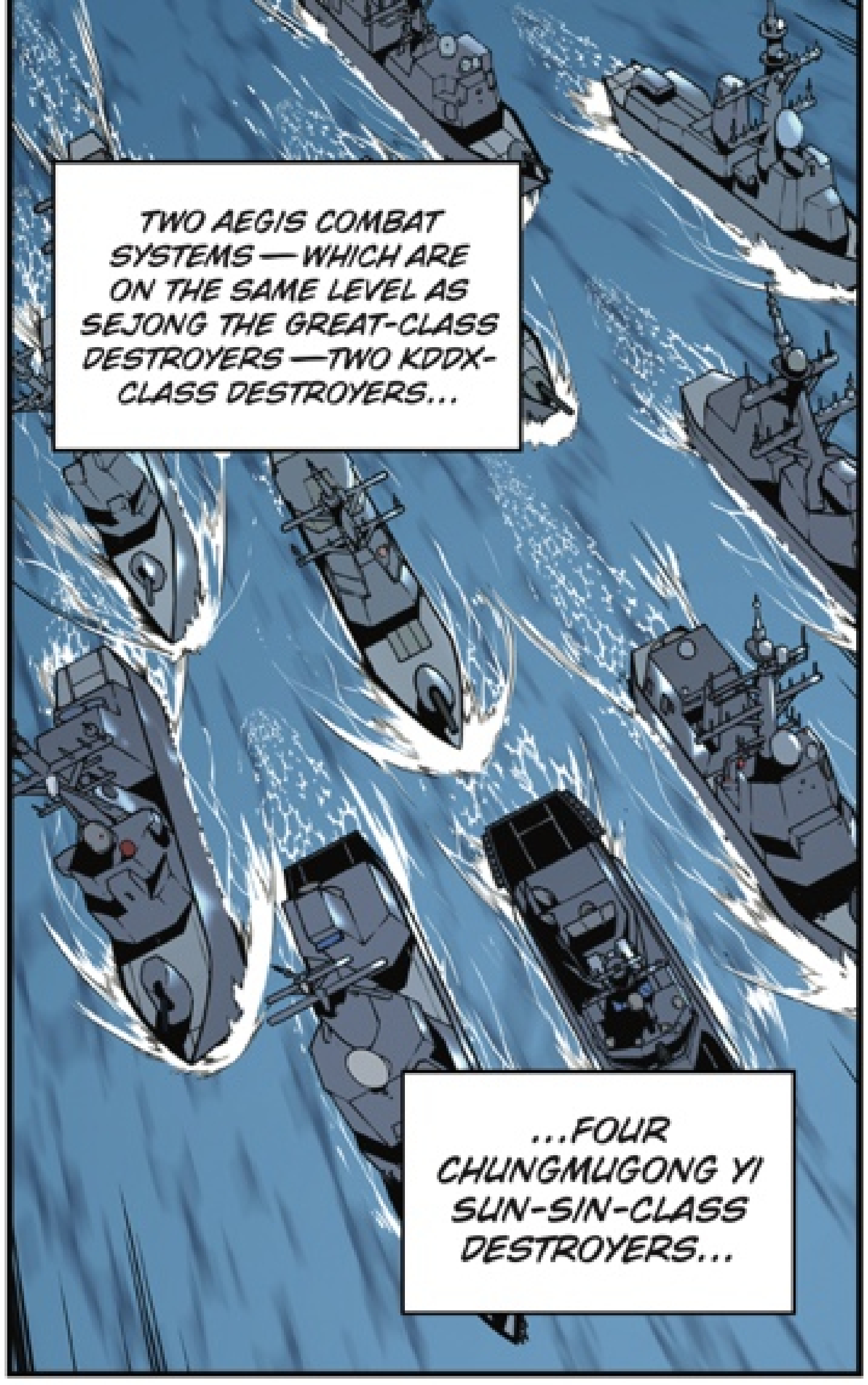
AND ONCE YOU SUCCUMB TO THAT FEELING...
SLASH
...IT'S HARD TO RETURN TO AN ORDINARY LIFE, RIGHT?
ARRRRGH!! AHHH!!
IT'D BE NICE...
...IF YOU CAN GET HOME BEFORE IT'S TOO DARK.

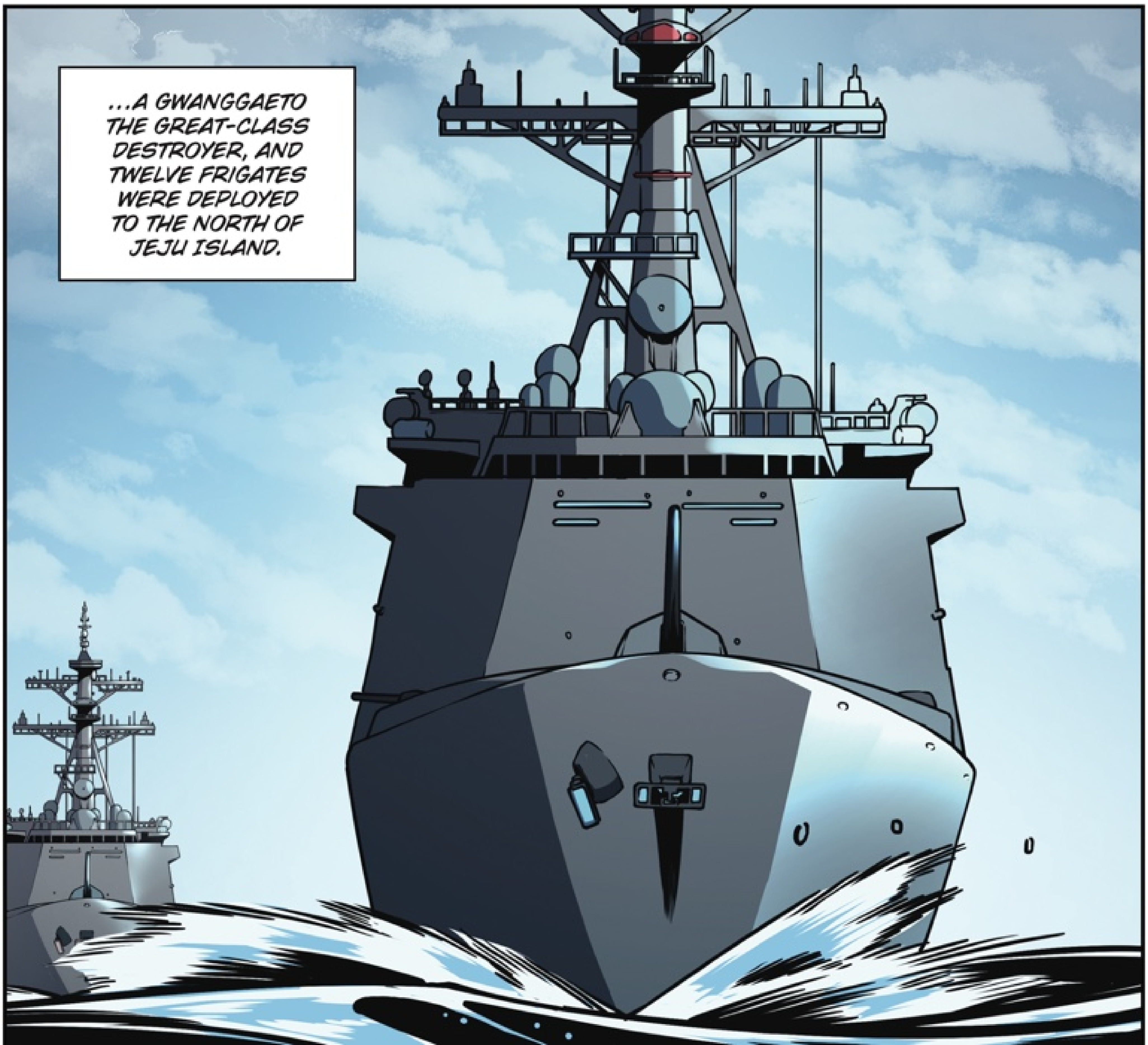
TAK
TAK
TAK
YOU KNOW, IF YOU WANT TO LIVE.
TURN YOURSELF IN BY MIDNIGHT.
IF THIS BASTARD DOESN'T GIVE HIMSELF UP BY MIDNIGHT, KILL HIM.
PERSONALLY, I HOPE YOU SURVIVE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH PATIENCE A HIGH ORC SHADOW SOLDIER HAS, BUT...
FINALLY...
...THE JEJU ISLAND RAID STARTS TOMORROW.

THE NEXT DAY
TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA
TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA
THE HELICOPTER TRANSPORTING THE HUNTERS TOOK OFF.
<At that moment, I felt...>

<...death...?>
<Haah...>
<I guess I'm being too sensitive...>
THE COASTLINE OF CHINA
THE COASTLINE OF TAIWAN

NEAR JEJU ISLAND
991


TWO AEGIS COMBAT SYSTEMS — WHICH ARE ON THE SAME LEVEL AS SEJONG THE GREAT-CLASS DESTROYERS — TWO KDDX-CLASS DESTROYERS...
...FOUR CHUNGMUGONG YI SUN-SIN-CLASS DESTROYERS...


...A GWANGGAETO THE GREAT-CLASS DESTROYER, AND TWELVE FRIGATES WERE DEPLOYED TO THE NORTH OF JEJU ISLAND.

PAY ATTENTION NOW.
ANTS MIGHT SENSE SOMETHIN' COMIN' AND FLY OUT HERE.
BRO, WILL THIS PLAN EVEN WORK ON THE ANTS?
NO ONE KNOWS 'TIL WE TRY.
KNIGHTS GUILD
AND THAT'S WHY WE, THE DEFENSE SQUAD, ARE HERE.
WE HAVETA KILL ANY FLYIN' ANTS TO KEEP THEM FROM REACHIN' THE KOREAN MAINLAND.
YOU'RE SO GREAT...! I, YOONTAE JUNG, TRUST AND FOLLOW YA!
PLEASE TAKE CARE OF OUR LINE OF DEFENSE.
WHAT CAN I EVEN DO? THE DEFENSE SQUAD IS JUST ON STANDBY.
THERE'S NOTHING TO DO TODAY.
SINCE ALL OUR GUILD MEMBERS ARE HERE, WHY DON'T YOU DO SOME TACTICAL TRAINING?
HOW CAN I DO THAT? I'M A VICE GUILD MASTER IN NAME ONLY.

OUR GUILD HAS GROWN AS BIG AS IT HAS BECAUSE YOU'VE MANAGED IT WELL.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SUGGESTED WE EXPAND OUR AREA OF ACTIVITY.
I'M BAD AT HANDLING THE BUSINESS SIDE.
I'M NOT COMFORTABLE SENDING YOU OUT, BUT PLEASE COME BACK SAFE.
FAME GUILD
WHAT?! WHY DID YOU STICK MINSUNG THERE?!
PUT HIM AS FAR TO THE REAR AS POSSIBLE! WE CAN'T HAVE HIM GETTING ATTACKED BY ANTS!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH HE'S WORTH?
WHAT? YOU CAN'T SWITCH HIS POSITION BECAUSE THE ASSIGNMENTS ARE SET?
THEN TELL HIM TO HIDE SOMEWHERE!

MEANWHILE, EVERY GUILD IS DEPLOYED TO THE SOUTH...
...AT THE REQUEST OF THE HUNTER'S ASSOCIATION.
I CAN MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION HERE.
REAPERS GUILD MINSUNG LEE (A-RANK)
EVEN IF THE RAID IS SUCCESSFUL, THEY ARE TASKED WITH KEEPING THE ANTS FROM REACHING THE MAINLAND.
HUNTERS GUILD KIHOON SON (A-RANK)
A STRIKE SQUAD CONSISTING OF A B-RANK HUNTER, THREE C-RANK HUNTERS AND TEN D-RANK HUNTERS...
...WAS FORMED TO PROTECT THE MAINLAND.
WHITE TIGER GUILD
JOOHEE LEE (B-RANK)
CHIYUL SONG (C-RANK)
EVEN RETIRED HUNTERS AND AWAKENED BEINGS WHO HAVEN'T BECOME HUNTERS YET ARE TAKING PART...

THE HUNTERS NUMBER 5,000.
ONE-TENTH OF ALL 50,000 AWAKENED BEINGS.
I'M A HUNTER-EXCLUSIVE CAMERAMAN.
JUST LIKE MY TITLE SAYS, I SPECIALIZE IN FILMING HUNTERS.
THIS RAID WILL AIR LIVE ALL OVER KOREA.
NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT PARENTAL GUIDANCE, THOUGH.
THERE'S A TEN-MINUTE DELAY, SO THE EDITING TEAM WILL CUT OUT ANY INAPPROPRIATE FOOTAGE.

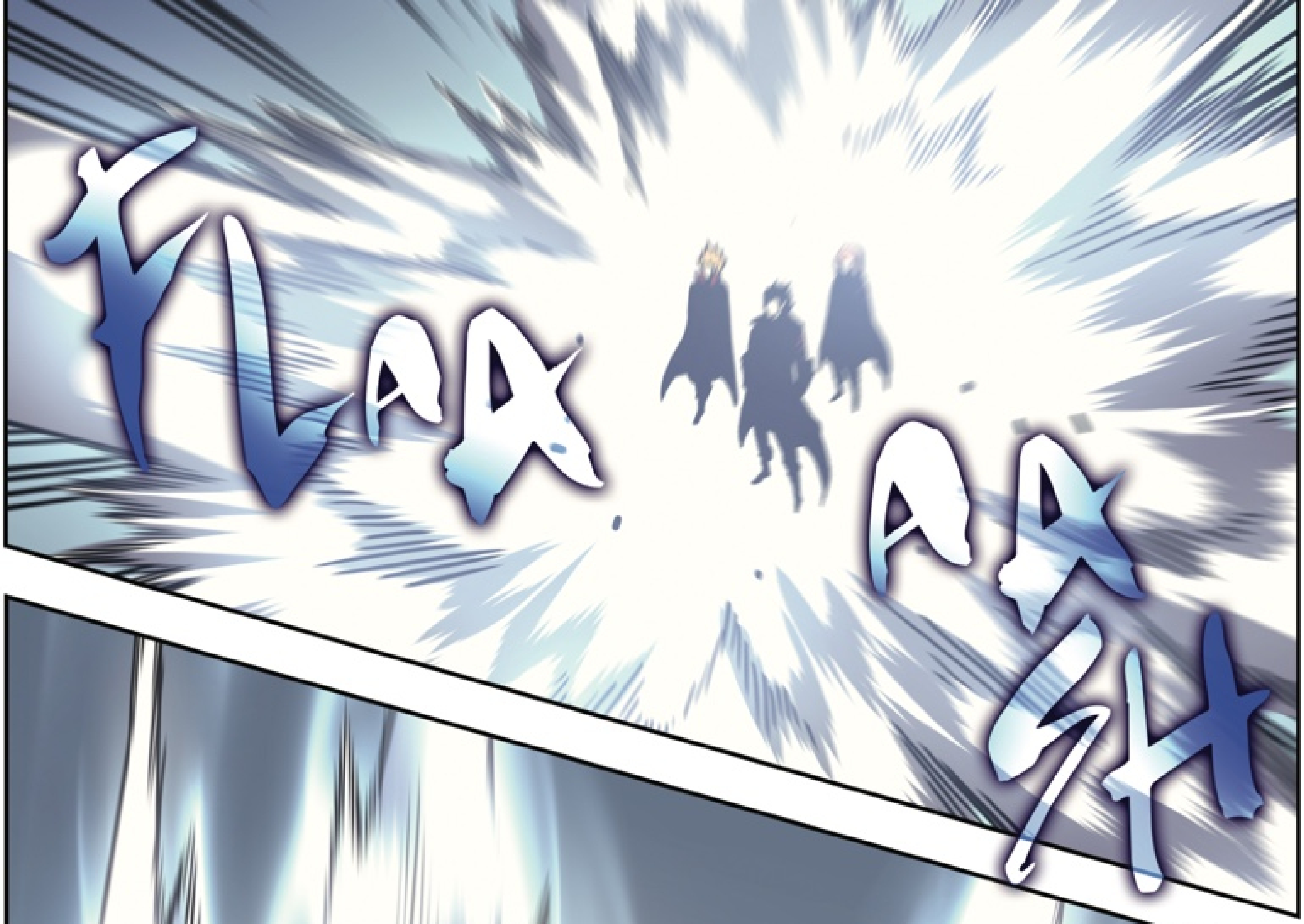
A CAMERAMAN ACCOMPANYING US INTO THIS DANGEROUS LOCATION...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT PRESIDENT GO WAS THINKING...
HUNTERS DO A BETTER JOB WHEN THERE'S SOMETHING THEY NEED TO PROTECT.
ANYWAY, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, MR. CAMERAMAN.
PLEASE DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. I MIGHT NOT LOOK IT, BUT I'M AN A-RANK HUNTER.
MANY AWAKENED BEINGS CHOOSE ORDINARY LIVES BECAUSE THEY AREN'T SUITED FOR RAIDS, DESPITE HAVING A HUNTER'S LICENSE.
CASE IN POINT— THIS CAMERAMAN WITH AN A-RANK HUNTER'S LICENSE.
IT'S LIKE I'M WORKING TWO JOBS AT ONCE.
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME I'VE FILMED SOMETHING DANGEROUS, THOUGH.
I'VE BEEN IN SEVERAL DUNGEON BREAKS.
BUT...I'M NOT SURE IF ANY OF THOSE EXPERIENCES WILL HELP HERE.
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
DON'T BE TOO NERVOUS.
THE HUNTER'S ASSOCIATION LIKELY ONLY APPROVED THE FILMING BECAUSE IT HAS A HIGH PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS.
TH-THANK YOU.
THANK YOU FOR SAYING THAT.

THIS WILL BE THE FIRST AND LAST CHANCE FOR CIVILIANS TO WITNESS AN S-RANK GATE RAID.
BECAUSE IF WE FAIL, KOREA COULD DISAPPEAR FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH...
JEJU ISLAND HAS EXPERIENCED THREE TRAGEDIES ALREADY.
LET'S HAVE A GREAT SUCCESS THIS TIME.
MORE THAN EVER, WE NEED A HERO WHO CAN SAVE THE WORLD.
ANYWAY...
HEY, BYUNGGU. I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO BE HERE.

I FIGURED YOU'D BE THE FIRST TO DIE WITHOUT ME.
YOU LEAP AT MAGIC BEASTS WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT AS SOON AS THEY COME INTO VIEW!
HEE HEE!
HA HA!
SINCE WHEN HAVE I EVER "LEAPED" AT MAGIC BEASTS?!
PRESIDENT BAEK, DID YOU MEET WITH JINWOO BY ANY CHANCE?
NO. WHY DO YOU ASK?
OH... NO, IT'S NOTHING.
OH-HO.
IT'S SHOWTIME.
TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA TAKKA
TREMBLE
TREMBLE

<Is this Jeju City?>
<It's like a ghost town.>
<These remains...>
<Did an ant eat its own kind?>
<It looks like there's a predator among them.>
<This is Alpha.>
<Sound off.>

<Bravo, over.>
<Charlie, over.>
<Delta, over.>
<Every-one...>
<...release.>


FLAAAASH

WHAT AN INCREDIBLE WAVE OF MANA...!
IT LOOKS LIKE THE JAPANESE TEAM HAS BEGUN.
VWOOM
VWUM
I'LL TAKE CARE OF THEM.

FLAME SPEAR!
FWOOSH
BOOM
BOOM
KA
BOOM

YOU'RE AMAZING.
NO...NOT SO MUCH.
I KNEW IT...
THOSE FLAMES WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH.
HOLD ON TIGHT. THE HELICOPTER'S GOING TO ROCK.
FWOOM
KRAKOOM

THE ANTS HAVE EVOLVED SO MUCH. THEY'RE WAY DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE.
MY MAGIC SPELLS WORK IN A-RANK DUNGEONS, BUT I HAVE TO CONCEN-TRATE THE POWER BECAUSE THESE ANTS HAVE A HIGH TOLERANCE TO THEM.
LET ME GAUGE THEIR ABILITIES FIRST.
H-HEY, PRESIDENT CHOI!
FRSH
IS MASTER CHOI...GOING TO BE OKAY?
HE'LL BE FINE.

HIS FLAME MAGIC IS MADE FOR FIGHTING AGAINST MULTIPLE ENEMIES.
FWOOOM

BOOOOOM
FWOOOM
I HAVEN'T PLAYED WITH ANTS SINCE I WAS A CHILD.
I REMEMBER USING A LIGHTER TO BURN THEM AND LISTENING TO THEM CRACKLE.
BOOM
BOOM
KA BOOM

NOW I HEAR THE SOUND OF FIREWORKS.

YOU MAY COME DOWN NOW.

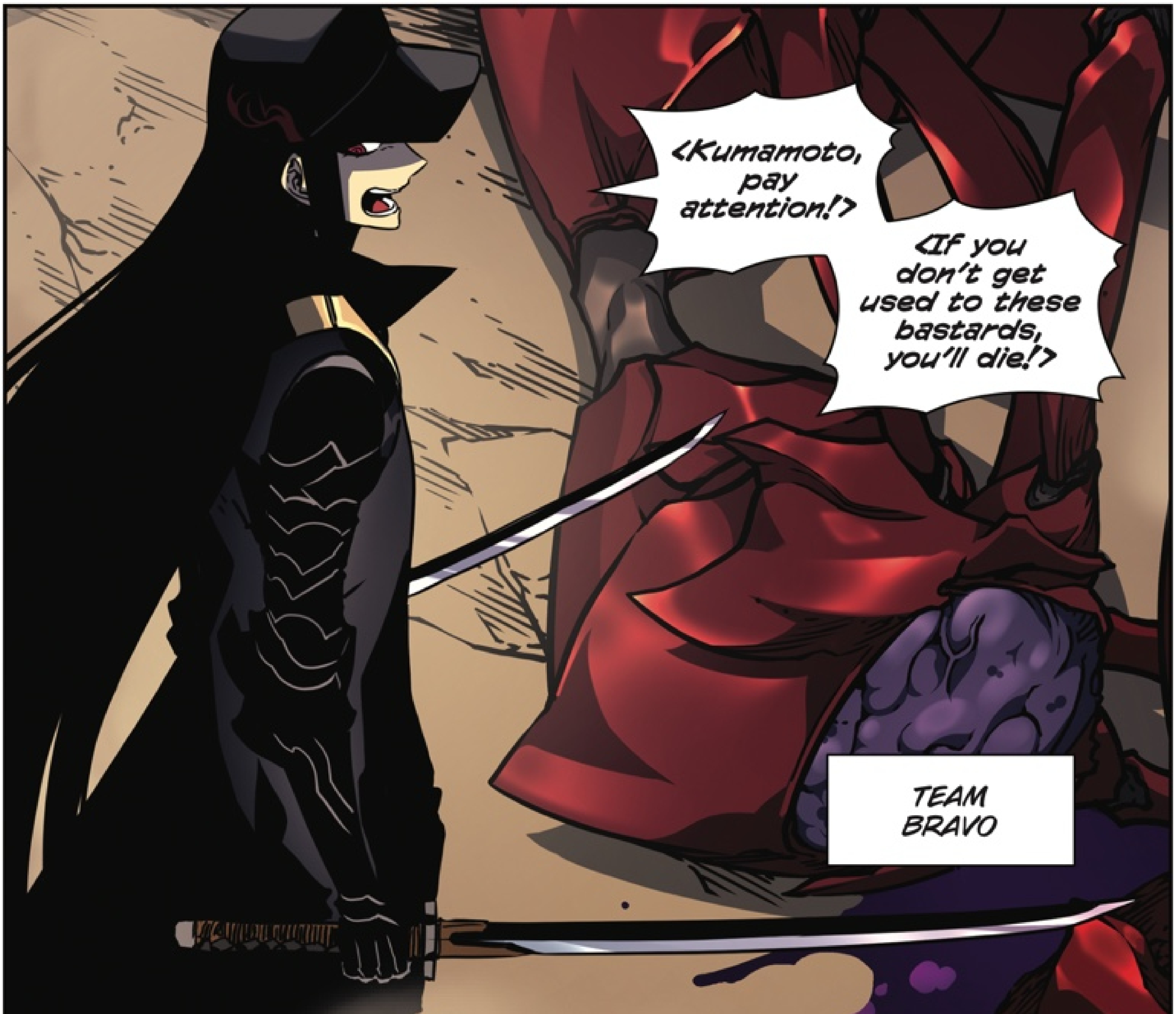
OH-HO.

UNLIKE THE PREVIOUS EXTERMINATION ATTEMPTS, THERE'S NO WAY TO ABORT THIS OPERATION.
DESERTERS WOULD FIND THEMSELVES ISOLATED.
THE JAPANESE HUNTERS CAN ONLY BUY US ABOUT AN HOUR.
WE HAVE THAT LONG TO ELIMINATE THE QUEEN BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.
IF YOU NEED TO PRAY, MAKE IT SHORT.
WE'LL BE FINE.
LET'S GO.

KAGA, THE SECOND DESTROYER
<Time to begin our operation.>
<Activate the jammer.>
<Activating the jammer.>
ZIIING

<This will block the queen's distress signal.>

<Aiee!>
WHUD


<Kumamoto, pay attention!>
<If you don't get used to these bastards, you'll die!>
TEAM BRAVO

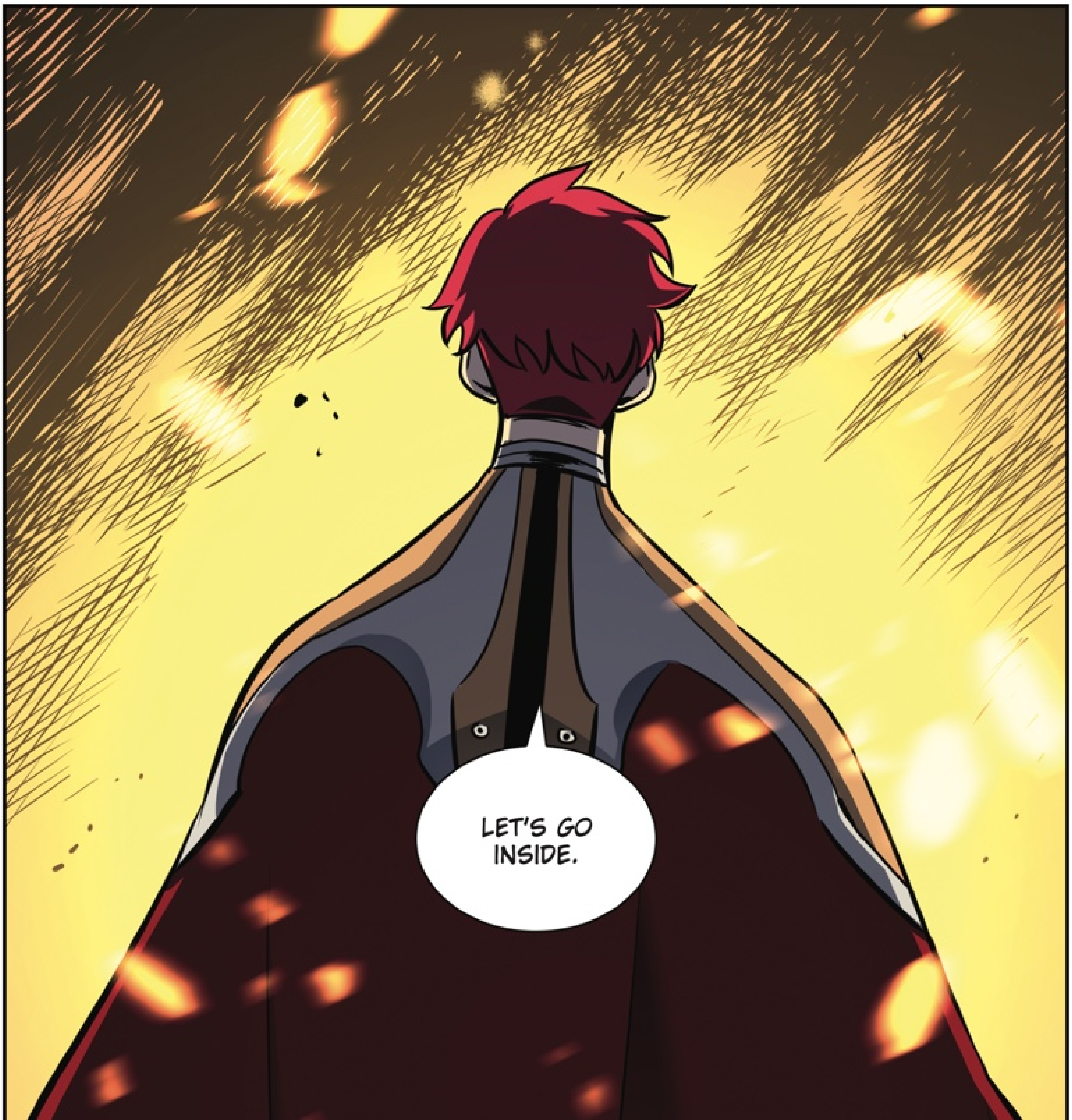
<At this rate, we might kill all the ants before the Korean team even eliminates the queen, no?>
<Maybe.>
<Where did Kenzo go?>
<He's playing hide-and-seek.>
<Looks like he's breaking the wings off every flying ant.>
<Why's he acting like a child?>
TEAM CHARLIE
TEAM DELTA
<There are tons of flames near the ants' cave.>
<It's probably what's his name...Jongin Choi.>
<What would happen...>
<...if my ice and his fire collided?>
<It'd be hot and cold. What else?>

THIS IS BAENGNOKDAM... IT USED BE FAMOUS FOR ITS BEAUTIFUL SCENERY, BUT...
...IT'S A MESS NOW.
IT'S JUST AN ANTHILL.
THE RING OF FIRE WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED TO HOLD THE BEASTS IN, BUT...
...NOW B- OR LOWER RANK ANTS WON'T BE ABLE TO PASS THROUGH.
I'LL LOOK FOR THE ENTRANCE.
SHWOOO

FFT
FFT
FFT
FFT
WHAT'RE YOU DOING? THAT'S DANGEROUS!
ZWP
ZWP
BANG
THESE TUNNELS ARE LIKE A MAZE.
ZWP
BANG
ZWP
EVERY ONE OF THEM WILL LEAD YOU BACK HERE, AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THOSE ARROWS.

BANG
BANG
BANG
WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE PLACE THAT DOESN'T LOOP BACK.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S THAT WAY.

I'M RELIEVED TO HAVE JONGIN ON OUR TEAM.


LET'S GO INSIDE.

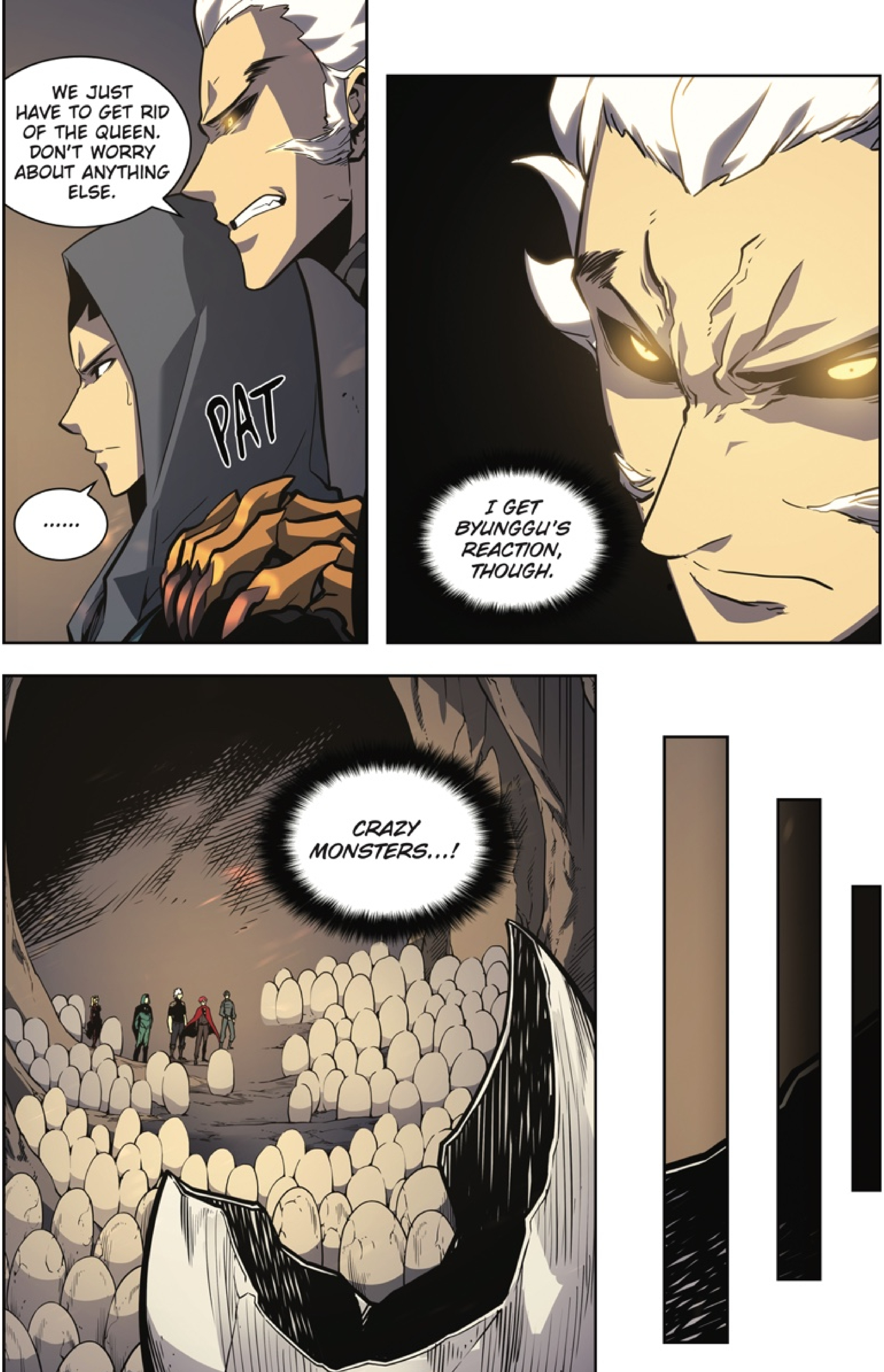
Total distance run: 10km
TMP
You have completed running 10km.
STATUS
STRENGTH: 219
STAMINA: 200
AGILITY: 230
INTELLECT: 250
PERCEPTION: 200
AP: 0
Physical Damage Decrease: 46%
THIS NEIGHBORHOOD IS USUALLY QUIET, BUT TODAY YOU CAN HEAR A PIN DROP.
I GUESS THE BROADCAST OF THE JEJU ISLAND RAID HAS STARTED ALREADY. NOT THAT I WANT TO WATCH IT...
THE KOREAN AND JAPANESE S-RANK HUNTERS...ARE POWERFUL HUNTERS, NO QUESTION.
WITH THEIR ABILITIES, THEY CAN ALMOST CERTAINLY ACCOMPLISH THE JEJU ISLAND MISSION WITHOUT ME.
UNLESS SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

SHUNK
EVERYTHING IS AS EXPECTED EXCEPT FOR THESE FEW REMAINING ANTS.
WE'VE NEVER SEEN THIS KIND BEFORE...ARE THEY THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARDS? BUT THEY SEEM TOO WEAK FOR THAT.
THEIR EYES ARE VESTIGIAL.
THEY PROBABLY EVOLVED TO PROTECT THE TUNNELS.
SHOULDN'T BE HARD, THEN.
CLEARING THE TUNNELS WILL BE EASY TILL WE HIT THE GUARDS.
WILL THE QUEEN REALLY BE THERE?
KINGS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO ABANDON THEIR OWN PEOPLE...
BUT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT ANTS HERE.
BESIDES, IT'S AN ISLAND. THERE'S NOWHERE TO RUN.
IT'S TOO DARK IN HERE. I DON'T KNOW HOW THE CAMERA'S GOING TO DO.
I'M SURE THE STATION WILL TAKE CARE OF IT ON THEIR END.

LOOK...!

IT'S THE SPAWNING GROUNDS.
THAT MEANS...
...THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER IS NEARBY.

THE ANTS WE ENCOUNTERED EARLIER WERE GUARDING THESE EGGS.
I'LL BURN THEM ALL.
HANG ON!
ONE OF THE EGGSHELLS IS ESPECIALLY HUGE!
NO...THAT CAN'T BE AN ANT EGG, CAN IT?
WHAT THE HELL CAME OUT OF IT?
A ROYAL GUARD? BUT...


WE JUST HAVE TO GET RID OF THE QUEEN. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.
PAT
......
I GET BYUNGGU'S REACTION, THOUGH.
CRAZY MONSTERS...!

<Kenzo, you look awful.>
<These bastards were more annoying than I expected.>
<They seemed to have actual tactics and be in some kind of formation.>
<I think I killed about thirty, but I took damage to my shoulder and ribs.>
<You want me to heal you? One condition, though.>
<Stop being a brat and heal me already!>
<There's something I want. It's not money this time.>
<What is it? You make more than me, you know.>
<You learned the taste of dough too young.>
<Just spit it out.>
<More ants are coming.>

<Hurry up and tell me. What is it?>
SPLSH
BLURCH

<In-coming!>
<Watch it...!>
<You bastard!!>
CRUNCH
SPLRSH

SLASH

SPLRT
WHUD

THESE ARE THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARDS ...!
EACH ONE IS AS STRONG AS AN S-RANK.
BUT THEY'RE STILL MAGIC BEASTS.
UNLIKE A HUNTER, WHO CAN EMPLOY DIFFERENT STRATEGIES...
...THEIR MOVEMENTS ARE SIMPLE!
SLAM

HUNTER CHA!
LEAP
SLASH
TMP

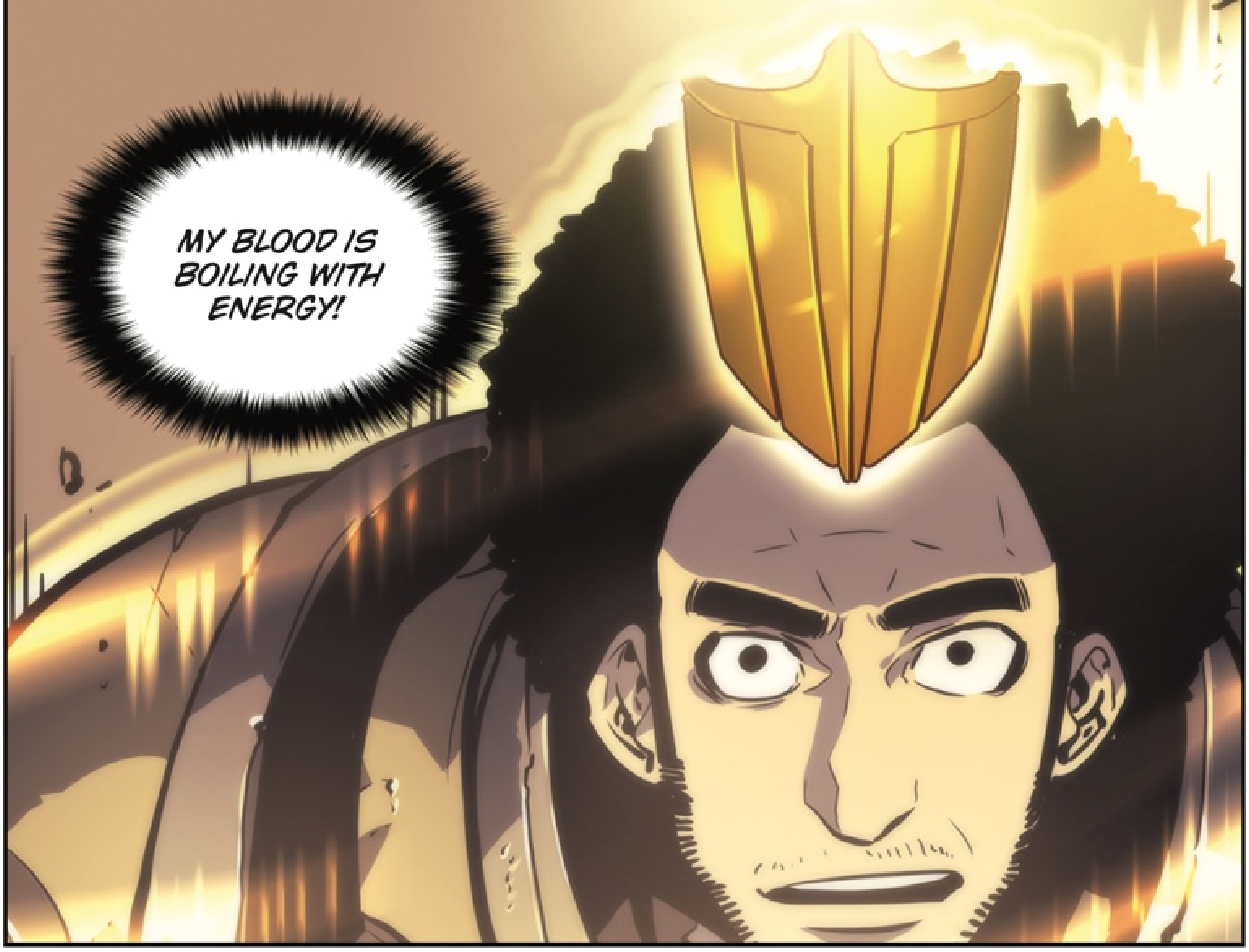
SHHK
THESE ANTS ARE QUITE HARD.
HARDER THAN I THOUGHT.

THE QUEEN'S GUARDS ARE DIFFERENT FROM OTHER ANTS.
GOOD THING THERE AREN'T TOO MANY OF THEM.
DON'T WORRY.
I'VE GOT YOUR BACKS.
YOU'RE NOT SUCH A COWARD AFTER ALL.
FWIP
WORRY ABOUT YOUR-SELF. DON'T ACT LIKE A ROOKIE.
KRAK

DID YOU FORGET? THESE BASTARDS CAN STILL MOVE SEVERAL MINUTES AFTER YOU CRUSH THEIR HEADS.
MAKE SURE THE ANTS CAN'T USE THEIR LIMBS. OR KILL THEM PROPERLY.
R... RIGHT!

IF THAT'S THE CASE, WE'D BETTER GET READY!
FLASH

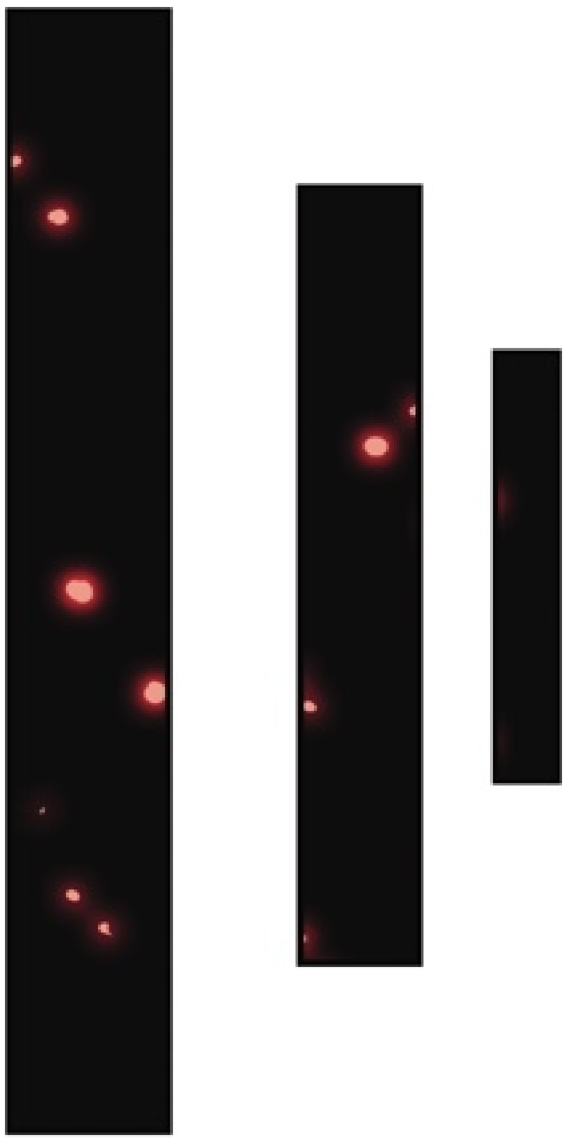
WE HAVEN'T EVEN REACHED THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER, BUT WE'VE ALREADY ENCOUNTERED GUARDS.
ONLY, THESE ARE FROM AN EARLIER GENERATION...
MY GUESS IS...THEY WERE PUSHED AWAY FROM THE QUEEN.
SO THE NEXT-GEN GUARDS ARE UP AHEAD.


MY BLOOD IS BOILING WITH ENERGY!

IT'S NOT ONLY HEALING US...
...IT'S FORTIFYING US TO HANDLE WHATEVER THOSE ANTS THROW AT US!

SO, WHAT, EACH OF US TAKES DOWN A DOZEN?
MY BATTLE SKILLS ARE A-RANK, SO...
...I CAN HANDLE ONE OR TWO.

HOW COULD WE ASK A HEALER TO BATTLE?
YOUR BUFF IS GOOD ENOUGH. JUST HANG BACK AND WATCH.



<Team Charlie can't be reached, so now we gotta check on them...>
<What the hell are they doing?>
<Slow down.>
<Was it around here?>
<Signs of a struggle...>
<Looks like they defeated these ants handily.>
<Where'd they go?>

<Fujishima's glasses?>
<Could this be...?>
<No...>
<It can't be.>

<Guh!?>
<BLARGH!?>
<Kei, what's wrong?!?>
<What is that horrible, nose-stinging smell...?>
FWOOOOOM
<This terrifying odor...>
<I've never smelled anything like it.>

¿AHHHH!!?
KRIUK
KRAACK

SHHK
CRUNCH

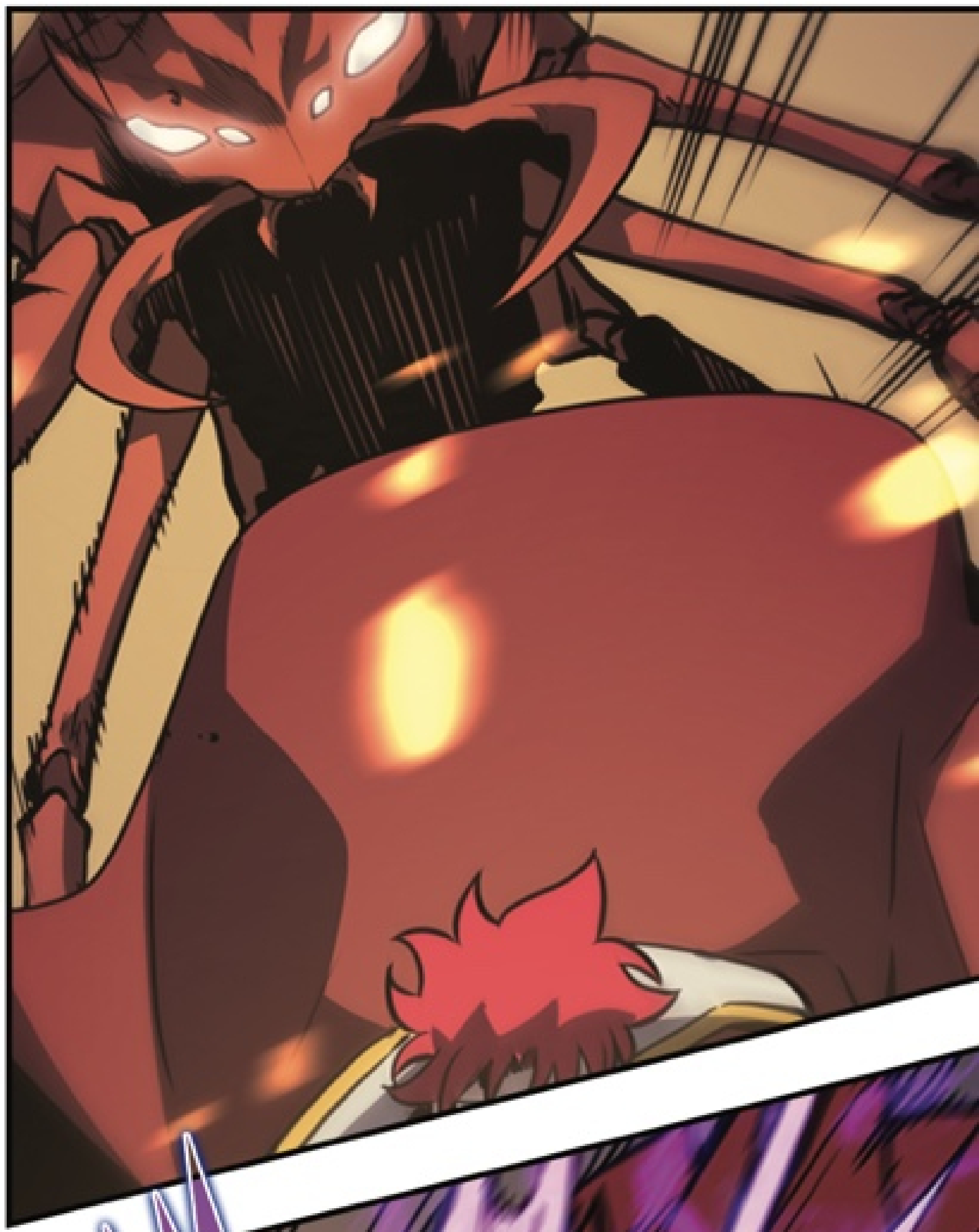
DAMN IT... THAT TOOK TOO LONG.
COME ON, IT ONLY TOOK FIVE MINUTES TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE ANTS. THAT'S FAST.

AMAZING. IT WAS LIKE BYUNGGU GAVE HUNTER CHA WINGS.
IN THAT SHORT SPAN OF TIME, SHE PROBABLY BUTCHERED TWICE AS MANY ANTS AS I DID.

IT TOOK US FIFTEEN MINUTES TO GET HERE.
IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE US LESS TIME GETTING BACK SINCE WE'VE GONE THAT WAY ONCE...
...SO WE HAVE THIRTY MINUTES TO WORK WITH.
THE IMPORTANT THING IS HOW WE END THIS...
THE SMELL...
SNIFF SNIFF
IT'S PROBABLY THE QUEEN. IT SEEMS LIKE HER BODYGUARDS ARE THERE TOO...
I'LL CHECK.
!!
VMM

IS THAT... THE QUEEN?
THE QUEEN IS AT THE VERY BACK.
THERE ARE EIGHT GUARDS IN FRONT OF HER.
THE QUEEN'S GUARDS ARE LIKE S-RANKS, BUT...
...THE OTHERS CAN TAKE CARE OF THEM WHILE I HANDLE THE QUEEN.
HUNTER CHA, YOU TACKLE THE GUARDS WHILE I DEAL WITH THE QUEEN!
LEAVE IT TO ME.
BOOM
KA BOOM
I'VE HELD BACK USING MY POWER, BUT IT'S HARD TO RESTRAIN MYSELF TODAY.

PRRAAA



BAM
BAM
BAM

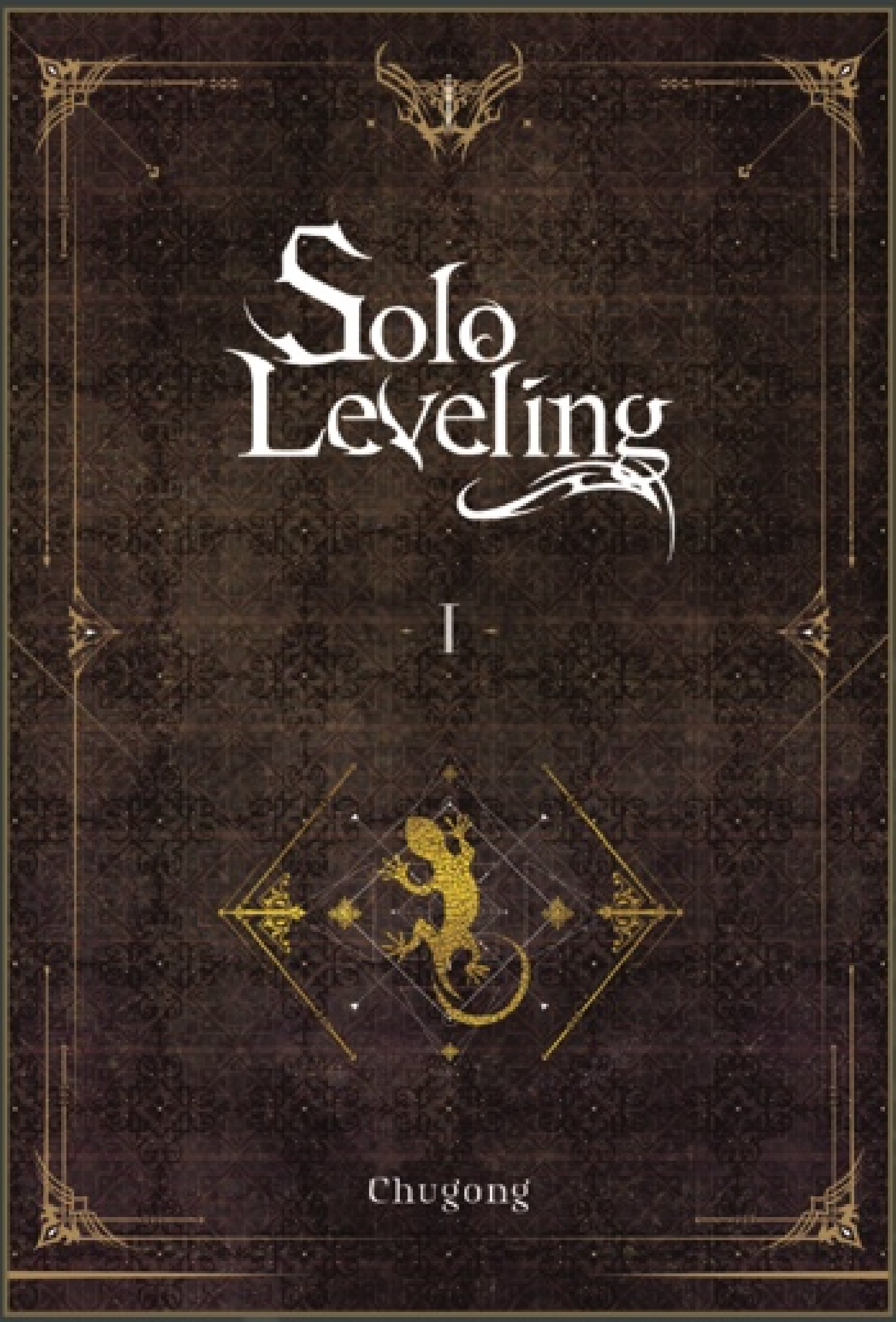
I'M WATCHING YOUR BACK, SO DON'T WORRY.
RIGHT. NO NEED TO HOLD BACK.
KRIK
KRACK

I DON'T CARE ABOUT REVEALING MY UGLY APPEARANCE...
...IF IT MEANS KILLING THESE DAMN BUGS!
RIP
SO THAT'S HUNTER BAEK'S SKILL—TRANS-FORMING INTO A MAGIC BEAST HIMSELF!

TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 7...

THE UNEXPECTED HAS HAPPENED ON THE JEJU ISLAND RAID!
THIS TERRIFYINGLY POWERFUL ENERGY...
IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!
IN THE MOST DESPERATE MOMENT, JINWOO SUNG STEPS IN!
ARE YOU THE KING OF THE HUMANS?
...SO THE BUG CAN TALK.
Solo Leveling
VOL. 7 COMING SOON!

Read the novel where it all began!



© Chugong 2017 / D&C MEDIA

Solo Leveling

E-rank hunter Jinwoo Sung has no money, no talent, and no prospects to speak of—and apparently, no luck, either! When he enters a hidden double dungeon one fateful day, he's abandoned by his party and left to die at the hands of some of the most horrific monsters he's ever encountered. But just before the last, fatal blow…

PING!

[Congratulations on becoming a Player.]

Available wherever books are sold!

YEN ON

For more information visit www.yenpress.com

Solo Leveling

SOLO LEVELING
6

DUBU
(REDICE STUDIO)

ORIGINAL STORY BY
CHUGONG

ADAPTED BY
h-goon

Translation: Hye Young Im ◆ Rewrite: J. Torres ◆ Lettering: Abigail Blackman

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

SOLO LEVELING Volume 6
© DUBU(REDICE STUDIO), Chugong, h-goon 2018 / D&C WEBTOON Biz
All rights reserved.
First published in Korea in 2018 by D&C WEBTOON Biz Co., Ltd.

English translation © 2023 by Ize Press, LLC

Ize Press, LLC supports the right to free expression and the value of copyright. The purpose of copyright is to encourage writers and artists to produce the creative works that enrich our culture.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book without permission is a theft of the author's intellectual property. If you would like permission to use material from the book (other than for review purposes), please contact the publisher. Thank you for your support of the author's rights.

Ize Press
150 West 30th Street, 19th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Visit us at izepress.com
facebook.com/izepress
twitter.com/izepress
instagram.com/izepress

First Ize Press Edition: March 2023
Edited by Abigail Blackman & Ize Press Editorial: Won Young Seo, JuYoun Lee
Designed by Ize Press Design: Wendy Chan

The publisher is not responsible for websites (or their content) that are not owned by the publisher.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020950228

ISBNs: 979-8-4009-0026-6 (paperback)
979-8-4009-0027-3 (ebook)

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

TPA

Printed in South Korea